Teen's 'no regrets' mottos helps her overcome adversity

Michelle Reese

April 25—Darby Jervis saw both her parents dive into a world of heroin addiction.

She lost her mom to AIDS when she was 8 years old. That same year, she came home from a vacation with family friends to learn her father was in prison.

The family she had travelled with became her new family.

Starting her preteen years in such turmoil, Darby adopted a motto at age 12 that most adults can't swallow: "No regrets."

The Sun Valley High School senior used that to torpedo her through trials that followed: becoming a mom at 15, being homeless, juggling work, school and parenting on her own.

Today, the 18-year-old carries a smile on her face, not a chip on her shoulder, and looks forward to graduating from high school.

Darby first came to Sun Valley in 2007 after finishing at Mesa's Poston Junior High School. Some of her five brothers also attended Sun Valley, a Mesa charter high school, so she was familiar with the program and the schedule suited her.

Just two years later, her son, Nathan, was born, and Darby took a year off. But she longed to return to the school. "Most teen moms drop out of high school and go straight to work to take care of their child."

"It's my safe place," she says.

Encouraged by teachers, she enrolled in Sun Valley's certified nurses' assistant program.

This spring, Darby, vice president of the school's National Honor Society, will graduate with accolades. In July, she'll take the exam that will allow her to start working in the field, with plans to start college within a year.