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Creativity and making people smile drives me. Let me explain by backing up to the days when I was still strapped into a car seat, way before the thought of getting my Driver's License ever crossed my mind. As a child with hours of free time, I skipped the dolls and instead reached for colored pencils and markers. At that young age, I didn't press the ink to my face and make a mess like other toddlers. I pressed marker to paper and drew. I loved it so much I brought paper and pencils to restaurant tables. I soon discovered my pictures had the ability to make people smile and brighten their day. I drew whatever I felt like. I soon realized, however, that my favorite things to draw were animals - whether it was a cat with red stripes or an octopus with sunglasses.

Each year, I begged my parents for a pet. I didn't care whether it was a hairless cat or even a turtle to compensate for my brother's allergies to pet dander. Although I never ended up with a pet of my own, I realized I could always draw an imaginary one. Fast forward to the Covid years when I had extra time on my hands and people also needed extra love. That provided the perfect opportunity to combine all of my passions. It started small - I drew a birthday card for my aunt with her cat, Izzy, with a party hat on. Then a thank you card for my friend with her dog. Once we put a few of my drawings up for display, the requests to start drawing people's pets started pouring in. I was drawing like crazy. I had fun doing it and the smiles that I got back were worth the time and effort it took. Around the same time, I began to volunteer weekly at the Idaho Humane Society. I loved the mission of the organization - and all of the cute animals, of course - and soon I was inspired to turn my hobby into a bigger project as a way to give back to the community. I designed and created my own website called www.MiaMooArt.com to start taking requests for drawings. Through my site, I sell pet portraits and cards and donate all of my profits to the Idaho Humane Society. So far, I have raised more than \$2,500 and drawn more than fifty animals.

As I begin driving toward my future, I want to study the science of making others feel better about themselves and the world we live in by studying clinical psychology. I have always been curious about human emotions and behavior, but my current sophomore year AP Psychology class jump-started a newfound, stronger interest. Creativity and art will always be a part of my life too, and yes, I hope to finally have a pet of my own one day!