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Grade 10

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What Drives You?

Ever since I was a child, I've struggled with mental health issues. I was about 10 years old when I first started experiencing symptoms of depression. I went from being the expressive, fun, loving and extroverted girl to being secluded, quiet and observant. I felt so alone, for years, like I was stuck in a cage with the key just out of reach, yearning for someone to grab it and set me free. But, no one seemed to know what I was going through. No one could see my hurt, my pain, my struggle. This experience is what drives me to help other kids just like me. The kids who feel like they have no one in their corner. I want to be able to make a positive impact on the mental health of children particularly in the school setting. That is what drives me.

As we know, children spend most of their time at school. School can even be an escape for some children. I know it was for me. I strive to be an outlet for children at school to have someone to go to, someone to listen to, someone to just be there in their times of need. Even if it's just one kid I help, I want to make a difference. So, for this reason I participate in my schools Educators Rising Club. This club creates and inspires the future educators of our nation. This club has given me so many opportunities to see what it's like to be a counselor in a day to day life. I was given the opportunity to job shadow counselors in my district and even had a counselor come into our club and tell us the things she does and how she does them.

Though, I'm still in high school I'm always trying to make a difference. For example, at our most recent state competition I spoke on how to help children's mental health in schools after the pandemic. And I don't plan on stopping there. After high school I plan on going to New Mexico State University and studying child psychology. My goal is to be a school counselor and work one on one with elementary school students. I strive to break the stigma that surrounds mental illness.

My passion for a place where children just like me can feel wanted and heard is what drives me every day to keep going. To not give up no matter what obstacle I may face. I know what it feels like to be forgotten, unimportant, lost. The longing to just be heard. All I've ever wanted to do is make that 10 year old little girl proud. I want her to know all her suffering wasn't for nothing. That *we* were able to make a difference. My drive comes from a place of knowing what it's like. My drive come from a place of wanting to make an actual difference in the world. My drive is to be the person I never had.