

Ivan Herrera
10th Grade
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Tulsa, Oklahoma

What Drives Me?

When I think about having determination and ambition to succeed, I think about my parents. My parents grew up in Guanajuato, Mexico with no electricity, or books, but that didn't stop them from wanting to succeed in life, so they immigrated to the United States to plant seeds for their children to be raised in America. I cannot imagine leaving the only country my relatives grew up in and living in a new nation where life is being restarted from scratch. Knowing this, I always looked at the opportunities ahead of me and I think to myself that I need to make my parent's transition from Mexico to America worth it. My mother always reminded my siblings and me that we would be the first to carry the Herrera last name in our bloodline and attend a university. In all honesty, my parents have been the best motivators and supporters I could ever ask for.

When I was in the 3rd grade, my class was given the assignment of mailing a letter to anyone we could think of. Due to my foolishness and aspiration, I sent my letter to then U.S. President Barack Obama. Surprisingly, a letter addressed from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was delivered. At the time, I did not know anything about government and politics, but this letter was a beacon of hope that I needed. The tangible aspect of the letter did not appeal to me, but what did was the intangible value of ambition and hope that was brought with it.

During that summer of 2021, I founded a summer project to get local citizens registered to vote. Along the way, I hosted voter registration drives at the Central Library in downtown Tulsa, went door-knocking with my mother in North Tulsa, and I even got interviewed on the news.

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That summer, I emailed my assistant principal about my idea for a student organization that focuses on registering the youth in Oklahoma to vote. Today, I am the founder and club president of Register Oklahoma, and so far, this student organization has held voter registration drives at multiple Tulsa City-County Libraries and at Union High School with guest speakers such as Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum. Lately, Register Oklahoma co-hosted a forum with candidates for one of the Union's school board elections. By assisting youth and the community, I have the privilege of serving on the Youth Services of Tulsa Youth Advisory Board and becoming the 2022 Masalene Jackson Youth Volunteer of the Year award recipient by the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma. I am so grateful for having experiences in my life that have helped me help others.

In the future, I have ambitions for attending a prestigious university in the hopes of one day becoming a politician in the halls of congress and making a difference in the lives of others. With the help of the Jiffy Lube Scholarship Program, I'm able to make my parents' dream of a better life for their children a reality.