

Addison, Clark
Grade 11, Boise High School
Idaho

What Drives You?

Take your hand and lightly pinch your lips together, now ask me again, “What drives You?” I would guess that you could barely understand what you said. Many would say the solution is to release your lips to avoid the muffled sound, but what if you can’t? As a young child, I often asked my uncle to repeat himself, speak louder, and articulate. As a teenager, I now work with my uncle, recognizing his disability, using cues and sign language to understand him, and doing all I can to ease his frustration of being misunderstood. So when I think about the question “What drives You?”, I think of being a bridge of communication for others, being a source of information, and a person that eases others’ struggles. It’s no surprise now that I wish to pursue medicine.

Being born with an extra chromosome wasn’t my uncle’s choice, it was my choice, however, to take the time to learn how to communicate with him. That is where my passion for the skill began. A skill that I took a deeper interest in when walking into my 8th-grade French class. That day I took a step into my uncle's shoes, understanding the frustration of not being understood. As I continued to learn French, my perspective towards others who have difficulty being understood changed. Whether it be a disability like Down syndrome, or English not being one’s first language, not having a way to communicate is a challenge.

My recognition of the importance of communication motivated me to bridge the gap where I’m able. I began to get involved in my community and joined a club that focuses on the inclusion of students with disabilities. I served as a peer mentor

during my freshman year and became a running buddy in local races for our disabled youth. When I was unable to bridge the gap with words, I would learn cues or even use my instrument to communicate instead. Beginning my Junior year of high school, I worked with a local hospice to provide music therapy and spread awareness for local charities with a small quartet of students.

Communication is not limited to language, it includes how to express one's feelings and understand various situations. Having gained experience in my community, I gained further interest in pediatrics and world health. A field where I can apply the skills learned in my youth, communicate difficult situations, and find solutions to ease others' frustrations. With that said, my drive is a continuous passion to bridge the gap. To understand each other, and be of service wherever and whenever possible. Continuing my education to gain the information necessary to pursue medicine, to one day use my French to provide healthcare in places that need it most, and learn the stories of others, taking the time and patience necessary to listen and learn from them, that is what my drive is to me. To become the best version of myself, so that I can give to others.