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Grade 12

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What Drives Me

When I was thirteen years old, my family moved from the small town of Panguitch, Utah, to the much larger city of St. George. Though my first two years in St. George were a struggle as I adjusted to the new situation, as sophomore year approached I resolved to try new things.

During my sophomore year, I began to read more and discovered a passion for finding word origins. This study is a branch of linguistics called etymology, and my interest in both etymology and linguistics in general has only grown since then. The fact that almost any word can be traced back to its origins never fails to amaze me. Every word in any language stems from a previous word or root, and many are closely related, which means finding the evolution of one word often means finding the evolution of several others. Ever since that discovery, I've known that I want to pursue a career of some sort in linguistics.

That vague desire began to take more shape at the start of my junior year, when I was given the opportunity to assist as a youth counselor at Special Needs Mutual. At this weekly, church-sponsored program, people of all ages with special needs come together to have a good time. We do games and activities ranging from talent shows and dances to pinewood derbies and holiday get-togethers. As a youth counselor, I have been able to meet several special needs individuals who suffer from speech impediments of varying severity. Nearly all of them would

benefit greatly from speech-language pathology, a type of therapy that helps people who struggle to form sounds learn to communicate more effectively. As a matter of fact, I struggled with a lisp when I was younger and managed to overcome it with the help of a dedicated speech therapist. These experiences have helped me set my sights on a career that would allow me to work in linguistics, find fulfillment in my work, and provide for a future family.

Currently, I plan to get a four-year degree in linguistics, and then pursue a graduate degree and certification in speech-language pathology. It is my hope that I will be able to use my knowledge and skills to help other people, especially those with limited access to speech services. This is my drive and I'm looking forward to the future!