

Kenessa, Washington

12th Grade

Billings West High School

Montana

What Drives You?

Human connection through self expression has gotten me where I am today, and continues to drive me farther along my path. Freshman year my life hit a climax- my anxiety peaked and my grades plummeted. As I began to pull myself together after days upon weeks in isolation, wearing an outfit I felt confident in was the only way I could face the world. Clothing became woven armor, with each piece, color, and texture being curated to offset an anxious undertone. An outfit speaks for you when you cannot find the strength to do it yourself, and once you find the strength to be bold from the inside out, clothing becomes more than a savior- it becomes your best friend.

Now healthier than ever, fashion is an ally in my life; jeans keep me comfortable and down to earth, jewelry becomes a talking point when reaching out to someone new. The collection of pieces and patterns someone wears is an advocate for the nature of their soul, and it paints the world in a diverse and beautiful way. The bond between an individual and self expression is a gorgeously powerful one, and ever since I've found it for myself I've been fueled for success through my passion for fashion.

Self expression calls for living life boldly, and lifts others up to do the same. I model these values by being a part of Interact, an international student-led volunteer group. Being present in my community I have come to appreciate our town for its businesses, clubs, and individuals who make Billings a happier, beneficial place for all.

Beyond high school, I am aiming for a degree in fashion business management and in international trade and marketing. I strive to support brands in reaching global audiences with strategies that acknowledge each location's uniqueness, ensuring cultural sensitivity and awareness while showcasing a company's confidence in expanding past their native culture and tongue.

Growing up, each neighbor spoke a different tongue, prepared a different dish, and shared a story wildly different from the rest. I was raised speaking both English and Spanish while learning Arabic, which sparked a love for the culture behind each tongue. This year I am learning Korean with hopes to collaborate with creatives globally in whichever avenues I pursue during my career. By obtaining a degree in fashion, I plan to foster my interest into a career that honors diversity and opens doors for up-and-coming brands on a global scale.

The beauty of fashion is the ability to introduce yourself to anyone around the world and relay a message without a word. Knowing the impact clothing has on my wellbeing, I am driven to promote the importance of dressing in a way that brings joy to your life and purpose to your identity. Thank you for your consideration, and the opportunity to share what inspires me to inspire others.