

Arianna Register
Donald Katz CNJM Scholarship 2023 Winner

I have always been indecisive, even as a child. I would take half an hour to choose a movie on family movie nights, have five favorite colors because it seemed unfair to choose one, and I played a multitude of sports. However, one thing that I was always sure of was that I wanted to help people. Whether that meant being a teacher, doctor, firefighter, surgeon, or lawyer, I didn't know, but the drive to do good has always pushed me.

I was a competitive cheerleader for nine seasons, from the age of 5 to 15. One of my favorite teams was SMOED, from the California All-Stars, who had an Awesomeness TV series. In 2014, an episode was released, talking about Ronin Shimizu, a 12-year old cheerleader who committed suicide after he was bullied mercilessly for cheering. His death struck me because, although he was a stranger, it was the first time I'd heard about a kid my age dying. This caused me to develop a sort of morbid fascination with depression and suicide. I fell down a rabbit hole of learning all that I could about mental health and cognitive and behavioral disorders and diseases. I had all of this information, but no idea how to use it.

For the longest time, I was convinced that I would be a pediatric surgeon. I had watched a lot of Grey's Anatomy and the romanticism of the life of a surgeon was very appealing, and Arizona Robinson had become my hero. Months into this dream of becoming a surgeon, I decided to watch surgery on YouTube and it felt wrong. I was looking at the insides of this woman and I didn't know her name, age, home life, political view, or the color of her eyes. It all seemed too impersonal.

In my junior year of high school, I began working at Kumon Learning Center. Despite the lack of training, and the fact that I was being paid minimum wage, what I was doing felt good. I was working with kids, some of them smarter than me-- teaching them how to read, write, add and multiply. Around this same time, I took AP Psychology, my favorite class I've ever taken. My already extensive knowledge had been expanded, and I learned about the biology behind many disorders, the environmental factors, and I was exposed to more obscure information. By the end of junior year, I had an epiphany; I finally had a concrete career plan.

All of my experience has led to my ultimate goal of becoming a child psychiatrist. Working with kids at Kumon was enjoyable, but teaching them math doesn't give me the human connection that I yearn for in an occupation. Being a doctor allows me to have the impact that I want on the world, but the field of psychiatry is so new, and I feel that each day will come with a new level of excitement. As a child psychiatrist, my patients will still be developing neurologically, allowing me to help nurture their brains before they reach adulthood and life becomes so set in stone.