

At age 11, I was diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome. I spent hours researching it, noting the parts of the brain it affected, the minute molecular details that shaped the big picture. In times of confusion, I found answers in neuroscience that helped me comprehend what I was experiencing, sparking newfound fascinations. Those moments of clarity shaped my goal of becoming a neurologist; I want to offer kids like me the same reassurance I once searched for.

Driven by this mission, I chose to attend the Academy for Health and Medical Sciences. I abandoned the traditional high school path to pursue a medically focused education. At the Academy, I traded general electives for college-level courses like Anatomy & Physiology, Medical Terminology, and Cultural Anthropology. Whether it was exploring the nervous system with meticulous detail or examining the cultural aspect of medicine, a specialized curriculum allowed me to transform from a patient seeking answers into a student seeking solutions.

Learning about medical practices in the classroom fueled my desire to contribute to the care of others. I recognized that public service is a cornerstone of a physician's mission, and I sought to discover what that responsibility meant to me personally. Volunteering at a hospice facility taught me the virtues of silence. As I sat quietly, I observed how patients' eyes brightened while they told tales of WW2 or shared the music they loved that shaped their lives. I grew up hearing that my voice matters, but something equally valuable was instilled in me at the hospice: choosing when to keep silent requires just as much skill, and can often cause greater impact. My vision of medicine is rooted in a commitment to ensuring that every individual's story is valued.

While the hospice taught me the power of listening, my work for the New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome showed me that sometimes, it's necessary to speak on behalf of a community. As a youth advocate, I spoke at grade schools and hospitals, tailoring my message to each audience. With doctors, I emphasized my experience receiving a diagnosis; with kids, I related to them by speaking about my own time in school. In each speech, I offered each person an understanding of Tourette's backed not just by a definition, but by my own story. Through NJCTS, I have learned how to be a vocal ally for patients in settings where their symptoms are often misinterpreted.

At 11 years-old, I sat in front of a computer screen looking for answers to explain my experience. Today, I am developing the expertise and skills to provide them. I believe a true healer is a multifaceted individual that understands the nuances and multidisciplinary nature of medicine. Through the Academy, Hospice volunteering, and Tourette's advocacy, I have combined the areas academia, public service, and leadership development to build the framework for my career. As I pursue higher education, I plan to adhere to this strategy, and build upon the same three pillars with greater sophistication. By supporting my journey today, you are investing in an aspiring neurologist who understands that holistic care lies at the intersection of academic excellence, and human connection.