

BRIGHTER HORIZON FOUNDATION'S 3RD ANNUAL

COLLEGE REVEAL EVENT

MAY 7, 2022 | 6:00 - 10:00 PM

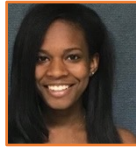


The Commonwealth Chateau
Chestnut Hill College

WELCOME TO THE COLLEGE REVEAL

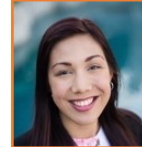
May 7, 2022

College Graduates – Class of 2022



... Brianna

Kelsie ...



High School Scholars – Class of 2026



... Jacob

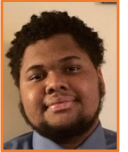


... Skye

Asmaa ...



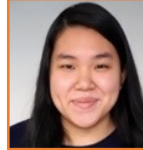
Keith. . .



Kaiyn. . .



... Michelle



... Christine



Cashmere. . .



Community College Scholar – Class of 2025



... Anna

Guests are welcome to join us after the program to meet the scholars, enjoy food, games, dancing, and take pictures at the photo booth.

Save the date: Brighter Horizon's 4th Annual College Reveal
Saturday, June 3, 2023 @ 6:00-10:00 PM

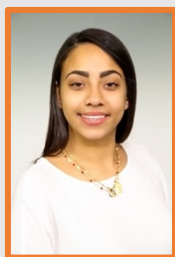
Thank You For Your Support
www.brighterhorizon.org

College Graduates & Scholars



Kalice

*Howard University
Class of 2021*



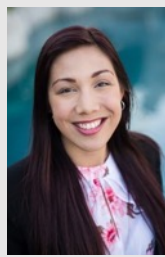
Virgen

*Drexel University
Class of 2021*



Brianna

*IUP
Class of 2022*



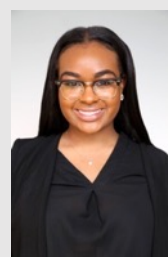
Kelsie

*Grand Canyon
Class of 2022*



Zybrena

*Clark Atlanta
Class of 2023*



Jamie

*U of Miami
Class of 2023*



Barry

*Temple
Class of 2024*



Michaeya

*Penn State
Class of 2024*



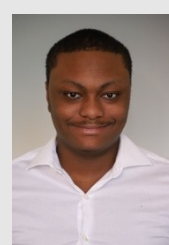
Safiyyah

*Cornell
Class of 2024*



Myles

*Penn State
Class of 2024*



Darien

*Kutztown
Class of 2024*



Giselle

*Penn State
Class of 2024*



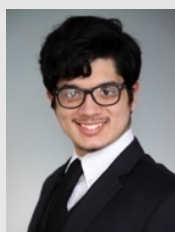
Nasir

*Williamson
Class of 2024*



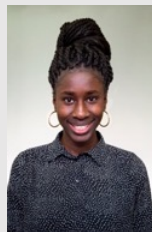
Amira

*Gwynedd Mercy
Nursing
Class of 2024*



Carlos

*Williamson
Class of 2024*



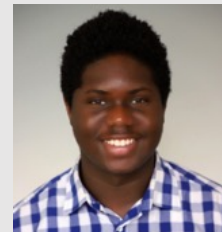
Jaymaba

*PENN
Class of 2025*



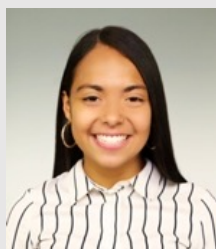
Tatiana

*Middlebury
Class of 2025*



Malik

*Georgetown
Class of 2025*



Aisha

*Jefferson Nursing
Class of 2025*



Ruqayyah

*Howard
Class of 2025*



Aiden

*Temple
Class of 2025*



Kyla

*Drexel
Class of 2025*



Beatriz

*Princeton
Class of 2025*



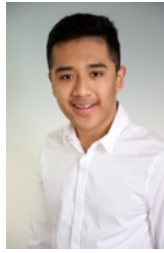
Vonyeh

*Penn State
Class of 2025*

High School Scholars



*Benjamin
Cristo Rey
Class of 2027*



*John
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2027*



*Jada
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2027*



*Charity
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2027*



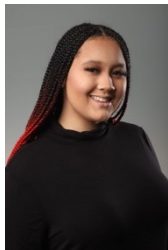
*James
Gulfport High School
Class of 2027*



*Aiden
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2027*



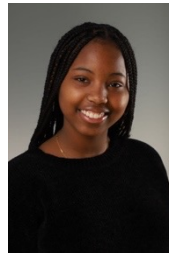
*Emily
Central High School
Class of 2027*



*Xiomara
Norristown
High School
Class of 2028*



*Yohelia
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2028*



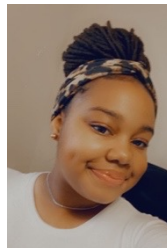
*Astan
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2028*



*Malea
George Washington
Carver
Class of 2028*



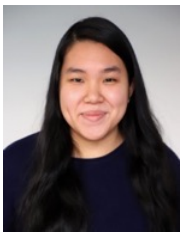
*Jonax
Cristo Rey
Class of 2028*



*Ja'Maiya
Norristown
High School
Class of 2028*



*Sean
Cristo Rey
Class of 2028*



Michelle
West Catholic High School
College Essay

"We need to go now! I might be in trouble!" she said in Vietnamese.

"It's all right, Mom, they understand it wasn't your fault."

My words did not calm her down. She had been accused of being the responsible party in a car accident and was frantic about what might happen to her. Unable to fluently communicate in English, my mom had insisted I go with her to get a police report, plus deal with her insurance. As I tried to wrap my brain around helping her with things I knew nothing about, I came to a powerful realization: I had become the leader of my family.

Being the eldest, American born child of Vietnamese immigrants, I had been reading emails, important letters, and financial aid forms for both my parents for as long as I could remember. It was frustrating at times, and time consuming, but it was what they needed to function as Americans. Not every child can say they understand the concept of a mortgage at seven years old but, for me, words like "interest" and "closing costs" were part of my childhood vocabulary. Yes, knowing how to pay bills and call customer service are valuable skills, but sometimes I was on the phone with a car insurance agent before even knowing the difference between the gas and the brakes. Without even realizing it, however, I eventually matured into my family leader role.

When I was younger, it never crossed my mind that it was out of the ordinary for me to be such a huge resource for my parents. It was simply how our family functioned. As I grew older, however, I longed for the "typical and ideal" American life where, so I thought, the parents did everything. Yet, these moments of questioning and frustration would always end with the understanding that I needed my parents in the same way they needed me. Whenever I doubted myself, my mom would be the first person I would go to for inspiration and support. Whenever she needed a translation or explanation, I would be the first person she'd call. Frankly, I wouldn't want it another way.

My position of family leadership does not only pertain to my parents. I am also the major role model for my siblings, a responsibility I take extremely seriously. In fact, during a teacher conference I attended last year, in order to translate for my parents, the teacher thought I was my younger sister's mother. I can't say I was especially happy about her misperception but ultimately considered it a compliment to my maturity.

With that maturity, I understand how my siblings mimic even the smallest aspects of my personality and speech. Thus, I do not allow myself to be anything less than an ideal student and citizen. Assuming the role of a parental figure for my brother and sister has also motivated me to be a pillar of knowledge for them. Along with my love of knowledge and desire to attend college, the ability to help my siblings drives me to work hard in the classroom.

Being aware of the immigrant culture and lifestyle has also allowed me to help others in similar shoes. Through my work with Global Bound Education in education package creation, plus working with students and their families, I have come to recognize why service to others is so important. I have used my voice to amplify and help the voiceless and, in doing so, have become more connected to the connectedness of all of us as a society.

It may have started with translating for my immigrant parents, but that small role led me to understand that I have the ability to also become a beacon of light for others. To express it in the language of my parents, I have become a người đứng đầu. In English, it's simpler. I am a leader.



Cashmere
George Washington Carver
College Essay

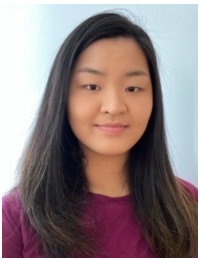
We journeyed long and hard, dodging waterfalls and abandoned tubes. Since I lacked a float, my father pulled me along. I was a buoy moving with the currents as I continuously pushed myself off the lazy river floor whenever I could reach it. My father held onto my baby brother's float as the waters got rough. I turned my head to avoid the water trickling like a leaky faucet up ahead. As I looked to my left, I saw a sign that read "4 feet." Oblivious to both the sign's meaning and the upcoming sudden change in depth, I plunged.

I slipped from my father's grasp unnoticed. I didn't panic, but the first few moments of being submerged were a blur. To my dismay, my father continued to push my younger brother's float, neglecting me. Why didn't I have a float? I had never felt more alone in my five years of life. I unsuccessfully attempted to push my head above the water once more. Panic took over and I flailed my feet and arms frantically. I got close enough to him to grab onto his shirt, and I did so as hard as I could. I could tell that this upset him because he yelled, "Just stand up!" and yanked me out of the water by my arm. I gasped and began crying. I didn't realize that the water's depth had returned to 3 feet and the crisis concluded, or so I thought.

Little did I know, this odyssey had just begun. The fear of drowning has followed me throughout my life. Defiantly, I chose to swim against any current I was up against and refused to ask for a floatation device. I clung to my father's advice to "just stand up," though I soon realized that it was easier said than done.

I struggled to "just stand up" in mathematics as I got sucked into the riptide that was the factoring quadratic equations lesson. I struggled to break through the surface of philosophy and its many theories. I gasped for air in the front of the classroom during my presentations. My tension came in waves, engulfing anything in its path, wiping any sense of progress away. I've learned the hard way that it's easy to lose sight of the depth of a situation when you're focusing on insignificant things and how quickly the water will engulf you, sweeping your head far below. But I've also learned the value of those floatation devices, and that sometimes you simply can't survive without them.

There have been countless days where I've come home, crying because I was overwhelmed, drowning, in school. I was told that I was "gifted" at a young age, which comes with a lot of pressure. Everyone held me on a pedestal. I set a high bar for myself, so it took a toll on my confidence when I went below that mark. Finally, I opened up to my mother, and she gave me advice that has stuck with me ever since: asking for help doesn't make you weak, instead, it makes you human. Ever since then, I've learned the importance of speaking up when I need help. I've learned that admitting you can't do something alone regardless of how much you want to and reaching out for assistance takes courage. Asking for help makes you stronger. Those floatation devices do keep your head above water. Regardless of where life leads me, I know I want to help others and hopefully support them in the way my mother supported and continues to support me. Whether this path leads me to counseling, public advocacy, or law, I'll remember to never be afraid to admit that I need help because it doesn't make me any less capable, and I'll teach others to do the same.



Anna
Rowan College Of South Jersey
College Essay

I rush out of my last class of the day and check the time as I run toward the campus parking lot: 7:15 pm. I pick up the pace, remembering that my seven-year-old brother still needs to get home to complete his homework and bedtime routines. After a 30-minute drive, I park outside of my parents' Chinese take-out restaurant and sprint to the backdoor to pick him up. Just before reaching the doorknob, I hear metal spatulas clashing against the wok as my father cooks and phones ringing incessantly with no one answering. I predict the scene awaiting me behind the door: impatient customers standing at the waiting area with their arms crossed, order slips filling the ticket rack— a seemingly unmanageable workload for only two kitchen workers. I take a deep breath and open the door. My mother is shouting in broken English, "Busy. Busy. Twenty minutes! You no want, you leave," waving her arms to shoo the customer away. I resolve the issue with the customer, work through the backlog of orders, and finally take my brother home at 10 pm. Once he's settled, I begin my own schoolwork as the clock ticks into the early morning hours.

From the age of fourteen, I have balanced attending school, working six hours per day and six days per week at the family restaurant, taking full responsibility for household chores, and caring for my younger brother. Until now, I have prioritized my desire to relieve my Chinese immigrant parents' stress and exhaustion over the pursuit of my personal interests. As a result, I have experienced a huge feeling of loss—missing out on events and experiences occurring outside of the realm of my familial responsibilities. I have grappled with this tension between my yearning for independence versus my sense of obligation. I have chosen obligation because I am grateful for my parents' sacrifices. I not only respect their hard work but also have personally endured their immigrant experience, from the monotonous workdays to the frequent comments from passersby attacking their Asian presence in America.

Taking on these responsibilities at a young age pushed me to be more aware of how I interact with others. When I was fourteen and first had to figure out how to care for my brother, I frequently yelled at him to demand obedience, rarely listened to him, and became easily frustrated while helping him with homework, as I imitated the ways my parents had treated me. When I noticed my brother beginning to act overly cautious around me, I realized that I needed to strike a balance between being his sister, friend, and guardian. I wanted to provide the love and support he needed to thrive; the way I wished my parents had cared for me. Therefore, when his school hosted spirit weeks, I made sure he had the resources to participate so that he would not feel like an outlier amongst his peers, as I felt years before. Instead of prodding him to obey, I learned to explain patiently why certain actions are wrong. This approach helped him recognize and grow from his mistakes.

By observing my family dynamics, I have developed not only a keen awareness of the needs of my family but also a curiosity about the impact family can have on children's psychological development. I've reflected upon how my parents' cultural background, socioeconomic status, and level of formal education have shaped our daily interactions, as well as how those interactions have in turn influenced my decisions and perspective. I want to further explore these ideas by studying psychology not only to contextualize my own experiences but also so that I can best help other children who share my background. I aspire to use the knowledge I gain from research to provide first-generation immigrant families with culturally sensitive resources to help children succeed—support that could help my family and countless others in my community to thrive.



Kaiyn
George Washington Carver
College Essay

I helped save my mother's life. After she was forced to have an emergency Caesarean section, doctors discovered that she had appendicitis, meaning that a natural birth would have resulted in her appendix bursting. Thankfully, my unplanned delivery saved her. Hearing this story from a young age inadvertently labeled me the "golden child" in my family, setting high expectations for me and making me wonder if I deserved this glory. Being raised by a strong single immigrant mother and growing up as an only child, I aspired to be a leader like her. Consequently, last year when my school's junior class elections were on the horizon, I saw a chance to put my abilities to the ultimate test. Although I had always performed well in school and connected genuinely with my peers, familiar doubts around not feeling worthy or qualified began to set in. In the end, I chose not to run and missed out on an opportunity that could have helped me grow as a leader. For as long as I could remember, I felt like I did not deserve the accolades and high praise I was receiving from my peers, colleagues, and teachers. Luckily, last year I learned about the phenomenon known as "Imposter Syndrome." Imposter Syndrome is the experience of distrusting your abilities and feeling like a fraud. As I became educated on the subject, I noticed that Imposter Syndrome was a textbook description of the negativity that had plagued me for so long. When someone complimented me, my automatic response was to think they were wrong. When I did well on a test, I thought, "I only did well because it was easy." As a result, I allowed many opportunities to slip away because I was afraid of what the outcome could be. Becoming aware of these habits prompted me to find the source of my Imposter Syndrome. I realized that, throughout my childhood, I felt an unspoken pressure to excel in everything I thought would make my family and community proud. The prospect of letting them down was devastating for me.

After I deeply reflected on the roots of my Imposter Syndrome, I began to break from my patterns. Instead of being afraid of risks, even small ones, such as responding to a question in class when I am unsure of the answer, I started facing these learning opportunities head-on. This method, even with occasional slip-ups, has allowed me to build up my confidence, instead of slowly tearing it down. For example, last summer, I stepped out of my comfort zone and applied to intern at the Union League of Philadelphia. When I was accepted, I initially doubted myself and felt that my supervisors would focus on my lack of experience. Instead, they noticed my work ethic and ability to think on my feet, which reassured me that pursuing leadership opportunities was something I could do. For this year's elections, I used my newfound confidence to run, and I was elected vice president of my senior class. In coming to terms with my Imposter Syndrome, I continue to feel more secure within myself. As much as I have enjoyed my new perspective on my accomplishments, there is a small piece of Imposter Syndrome that I still enjoy having with me. The feeling that I can always do better, and that nothing will ever be handed to me, has managed to, and always will, keep me humble, striving for bigger and better goals. In the past, Imposter Syndrome made me fearful and weak. Today, using Imposter Syndrome creatively gives me courage and strength, and a healthy aspiration in life. In my heart, I have realized that I am not an imposter; I work hard, and I deserve what I achieve.



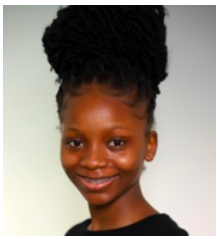
Asmaa
George Washington Carver
College Essay

"Your brother is a man, you're a woman, you have to do these things, not him." When I first heard these words in my house, I saw a lot of things differently. I'm always the one to help my mother with cleaning, but I was feeling tired after dinner on this particular day, and I asked if my brother could help her instead. These words from my mother made me realize the divide I was living by in my family, one that I have always lived by and never questioned. In my house, because I am a woman, I had to always be more responsible, mature, and respectful in every situation. I have to take care of all the household chores like washing the dishes, doing laundry, and folding clothes. My grades have to be outstanding, my behavior pristine. I see me and my brother as equal, and the realization that my parents held different standards for the two of us because of our genders, rattled me.

My parents are immigrants, with my mom from Yemen and dad from Ethiopia. Where they grew up, these patriarchal views were typical and unquestioned. My parents would often remind me how lucky I was because in their country, women wouldn't even be going to school, but instead working in the house. So, in this way, it is hard to blame them for the way they've raised my brother and I differently based on our gender. But at the same time, I was born and raised in America. In this country, women have a lot more freedom and rights, which is what I later realized as I saw the difference between my family and my American friends' families. While my mother reminded me of housework and marriage, my friends' parents encouraged them to work hard but still go easy on themselves. While I was scolded for not tending to my brother's chores, my friends' brothers were responsible for their own chores. While I was busy in the house cleaning up after everybody, my friends would be outside playing all day long.

However, instead of trying to defy my parents' teaching techniques, I take how I've grown up and aim to set an example for younger women to hope that they can grow up feeling the same way that I do - conscious of how I am to be able to set goals and follow my dreams regardless of my gender. With younger women in my family and in my community, I often talk to them about feeling encouraged and having hope because I don't want them to think that they have to live up to the expectations of what our parents think a woman should be and instead, they should create their own definition of what it means to be a woman in this community.

Ultimately, I see myself working somewhere in the Middle East where women don't have the same opportunities that I had growing up. I want to give them hope and encouragement so they can see their potential and be successful. In college, I plan on joining many clubs and organizations that advocate for women, and if I had an opportunity to, I would create a women's mentorship club where all women can join to talk amongst each other and offer advice. Since I am the oldest sibling, for me, I saw value in connecting with someone older than me who experiences similar struggles because it gave me a sense of hope. Also, as a Muslim woman, I want to educate people on what Islam truly is since many people think of Islam as a misogynistic religion, when, in reality, it is the exact opposite of that. But unfortunately, a lot of Middle Eastern cultures are the reason why people assume that Islam hates women. The culture is patriarchal and enforces misogyny, but many people don't know that, so they associate Islam with misogyny which is an issue I want to help fix. Ideally, I plan on becoming an example and role model for many women like me so they can understand the power that they hold and motivate themselves to follow their dreams.



Christine
West Catholic High School
College Essay

“You’re going to America!!” That morning started a new chapter for me. I was eight years old and everyone around me was telling me about how great this land was, but I was going to have to live with parents I hadn’t known since I was two. I was excited, but sad to leave my home. Suddenly, I was in the airport, which was filled with people who were also confused, happy, tired, and cold. All those emotions swirled around me, and at that moment when I was boarding the plane, everything hit me. I’ve left the life and routine I was used to to start this new one with people I didn’t know. I was sitting with my older brother who I had only lived with for two years before this journey. Everyone was sleeping around me, but I couldn’t because of all these thoughts of what life would be like in America for me. People talked about how lavish America was, but all I could think about were the people I was leaving behind and how I was going to have to start fresh.

I was born Christmas of 2001 while a war was taking place in Liberia. Most people were leaving the country. A few years later, my parents won a diversity visa, but they could only afford a flight for two people, so my ten-year-old older brother and I had to stay back. We were split up. I lived with my mother’s cousin and my brother with her brother. I grew up to know this lady and her significant other as my parents. My birth parents, in my head, were people who would help support us, but other than that they weren’t real.

In September of 2010, I was placed in first grade because my reading level wasn’t good. So, instead of having me struggle, my parents agreed for me to start in first grade, even though I was older than the other kids. I hated life because I didn’t really understand or know anyone. I was a foreigner who could barely speak English, sitting in a class with six-year-old students. It seemed like all the students around me were smarter than I was. I felt stupid and hated returning home to people who didn’t know how difficult it was for me to go to school every day. My first-grade teacher, who eventually became my godmother, helped me find motivation in school. She would help me with lessons after school, but she was also an emotional outlet. With help from her, my parents, and God, I was able to start understanding the importance of taking education seriously.

Finally, my grades improved and by the time I was in sixth grade, I was given a scholarship. I felt proud of myself. It was another new chapter. The scholarship requested that I join a program during the summer, so I joined the engineering program at West Catholic and discovered what I hoped to pursue in college. I really didn’t know what engineering was and I was the only girl in that section. We made a hydraulic arm, and I was happy to have the chance to work with that equipment.

Two years later, I was placed into the engineering program at West Catholic and the instructor remembered me. I had the chance to teach the other students how to make that same hydraulic arm. My sophomore year we created our own plexiglass light box, and we also started a pinball machine, but couldn’t finish because the pandemic hit, so we moved from being hands on to writing codes. I loved writing codes, and I now want to write codes for devices. I want to become an engineer so I can take this passion I have for wanting to help others and creating devices to improve the world and launch my next chapter.



Skye
Creative and Performing Arts
College Essay

The Skye's the limit; you can do whatever you set your mind to." I could hear my mom's voice as I climbed the steps headed for one of the most important things I've ever faced: my audition. My hands shook as I entered a huge hall with a massive ceiling. There were grand steps leading to the second floor with artwork from students and alumni everywhere. I walked up some more steps and headed to a room where other kids my age were waiting to be challenged by a written test on music theory, sight singing, sight reading, and performing two songs. We were handed papers and pencils and told to do "as best we could." How in the world was I supposed to do that? The only symbol out of all those hieroglyphics I knew was a treble clef, and only because it's such a common symbol for music. I finished quickly and stood up, handing my paper to the person at the front. They told me to wait outside in front of the choir room. After a while, more people filled the empty chairs, their faces plastered with the same nervous expression that I had. It was comforting knowing I wasn't the only one. As I waited, my mind wandered back to that first time I ever saw this building from the outside.

As my mom and I drove down Broad Street, I spotted it: a museum-like building with grand steps leading up to four doors. It looked old; I could just tell there were stories deep behind those walls. Plastered on the building in big bold letters was "CAPA" - Creative and Performing Arts. I turned to my mom and asked, "What's that building?" "That's CAPA," she answered. "Talented kids go there to express themselves and learn about the performing arts."

My face lit up and I knew that was where my future was. The whole way home I couldn't stop thinking about CAPA and I wondered if it would be like *Victorious* with kids singing and dancing in the hallways. Immediately, I ran upstairs and looked it up. I was flabbergasted. People like Boyz II Men, Leslie Odom Jr., and even Jazmine Sullivan went there! "This is it," I thought to myself. "This is the place I want to go and graduate from." I could see myself walking down those big steps with books in my hand laughing and talking to friends. I wanted to be one of those names CAPA is known for who inspires others.

Then all of a sudden, the big brown doors opened, and a woman peered out calling each of our names. My last name starts with a W, so it seemed like ages before I was finally called. Before I knew it, I was walking out of the building. My mom asked, "How do you think you did?" "I honestly don't know," I answered. I didn't know if I had gotten into my dream school or not. My heart was racing as if I ran a marathon, but it wasn't from those steps. The anticipation and uncertainty ate away at me, and I thought about the first time I had ever stood up to perform.

I opened the huge brown doors and was hit with a gust of wind. The scent of benzoin and resin filled my nose. As I took a few steps inside my view was filled with rows of pews that could go on for days and beautiful stained glass with an array of colors so beautiful it almost took your breath. Along the aisles were white stone columns leading to a podium with spotlights on it. I had been practicing for weeks: that's where I was going to stand and perform. After the sermon, I stood up. My legs felt like jello, like my lower half was in a pool of quicksand. I was fighting with my body to get up there and my heart was pounding a mile a minute. I'm sure it would've jumped out of my chest and run off the stage if it could. Days later, I finally received a letter. I was accepted into CAPA. The moment felt so surreal. My mom always told me that the "Skye" was the limit, and in that moment, it really felt true. I've experienced what hard work and passion can help me achieve, and I can't wait to see how I can stretch my limits in college and beyond.

The "Skye" really is the limit when you put in the work and strive for something great, achieving it. My mom always told me this and it will stick with me forever, always playing in my head like my own little special mission statement no one can take away from me because it makes me who I am and what I strive to be. My future is bright, and only I can limit it.



Jacob
Gulfport High School
College Essay

Is it better to know a little about a lot of things or a lot about one thing? For me, this is one of the easiest questions to answer.

I don't know exactly when or why it started but I've always had an obsession with the animal kingdom. I read about them, watch documentaries, and explored various species online. And if I see one, I do my best to get a closer look. After a particular incident with a hermit crab, every venture to the beach turns into an easter egg hunt but for crustaceans.

Unfortunately, I've never had a pet of my own. Although I've pleaded and begged desperately for a dog or any sort of non-human companionship, my mom refuses to relent. She doesn't tolerate animals in the least. Yet, despite her aversion to the fauna of the world, she never fails to tell me about what new creature she's seen. She always has a story about the raccoon she saw a few days ago or the turtle she saw this morning. It always frustrates me because I'm the animal lover of the house. However, this doesn't stop me from watching dog shows and thinking about the Black Lab Sparky that continues to appear in my dreams.

Not only have I never had a pet, I've also never been to a zoo. But I can't blame that on my mom. While the closest zoo is only an hour and a half away, I can't stand seeing animals in captivity. My intense fascination with all animals from amoebas to ring tailed lemurs has gotten me into some trouble. While I was working on a research project on a salamander, my lust for knowledge led me on a goose chase across the internet, discovering facts about eagles and Komodo dragons and I was drifting farther and farther away from my assigned topic. I could've kept going for hours until my mom rescued me from my explorations by walking into my room.

My thirst for animal facts has taught me much more than just elephants and their 40,000 trunk muscles. I've learned so much about the world around me. The variety of animals has taught me about diverse cultures around the world. The smallest creature can influence so much more than it knows about. I feel that this applies to people too, myself included. The common phrase "don't judge a book by its cover" is seen everywhere in the animal kingdom.

This passion for animals has sparked an in depth look at my future. Whether I become a zoologist, wildlife biologist, or species conservationist, I easily can see myself working in the fields of the Serengeti or rehabilitating Koalas from the wildfires of the Australian Outback. My biggest dream would be to one day discover a new species at the bottom of the Atlantic ocean or in the treetops of the Amazon Rainforest.

I remember one morning I saw a frog on my way to school. At that moment, I wanted nothing more than to stop and study it. But I had a bus to catch, so every day since that encounter I've searched for that frog to no avail.

"Mom, can I get a dog?"

"Jacob, I've told you a million times."

"Please?"

"NO"

"How about a cat?"

"NO"

Desperate "Goldfish?"

"..." silence intensifies.

"We'll see".

Inner self: "Not the victory I was hoping for, but it's a start."

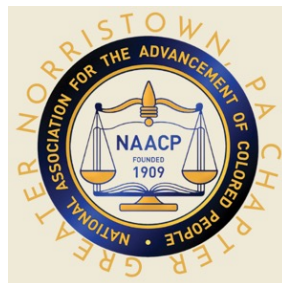
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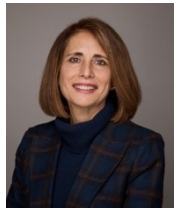
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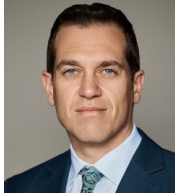
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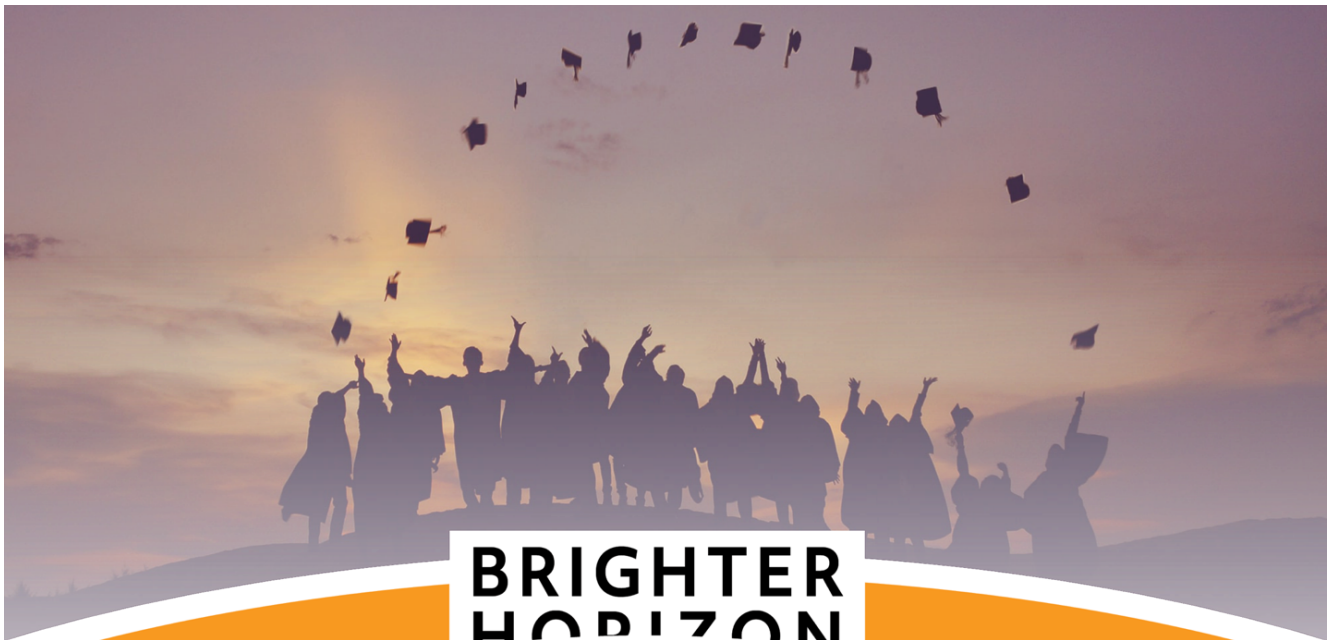
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