

Illiana Placencia

Growing up, I was exposed daily to my parents talking about what transpired during their work day. My dad, who is employed as a Deputy Sheriff, would tell me how he rescued a woman and her child out of a burning vehicle on I-10. My mom is employed as a Probation Officer; she shares how she is able to get help for her clients with substance abuse issues and get them back on track. Every day they would share with me how they helped someone who was in need. Being an only child, I absorbed their experiences and was fascinated on how they help people on a daily basis in different ways. Helping people was and continues to be a major topic in our home. When I told them I wanted to be a doctor at 14 years old, they were more surprised than anything. Having been exposed to law enforcement all my life, they were stunned that I wanted to do something so demanding. Both my parents are very supportive with my future plans, which include getting a bachelor's degree and going to medical school in hopes of one day achieving my goal in becoming an anesthesiologist.

Since then, I have worked hard in school to ensure that my goal of going to medical school was possible and not just a fantasy. I knew that from the beginning it wasn't going to be easy, so I chose to take steps to prepare for my future. When I was preparing to enter high school, I remember not wanting to take Pre-AP classes my freshman year. I thought it was going to be too challenging and I just wanted to take the average path in high school. I realized that in order to achieve my goal, I was going to have to work hard. I decided to take all AP classes my freshman year. I really didn't know what to expect and was rather nervous in doing so. To my surprise, I did very well in all my classes and realized that by sacrificing some Friday night football games with my friends, I could put in more study time for my classes or get that extra sleep needed before a swim meet. I quickly became a fan of modern science and took an interest in the dynamics of biology. Besides my core classes, extra-curricular activities and school

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activities, I took it upon myself to fill my class schedule with additional science classes than what was required. I enrolled in AP Chemistry and Anatomy. The completion of these two classes further influenced me to one day pursue a degree in the science field.

Since a very young age, I was exposed to various community projects within the city and the county. I saw the happiness it brought people when my parents would help them. When I entered middle school I started volunteering at different agencies to help me decide the path that I wanted to take in life. I have always had the desire and instinct to help people. I decided to volunteer at agencies within my community that assist people in different situations. Last year during the Thanksgiving holidays, I helped distribute turkeys to the less fortunate residents of El Paso County. Their sense of appreciation is beyond words and the feeling of helping them is satisfying. During the Christmas holidays, I assisted in wrapping gifts for less fortunate children in El Paso County. Kids were asking for the simplest things, such as slippers for their mom or grandmother instead of themselves. These gestures warmed my heart and I was honored to be helping them. One of the most memorable events I have participated in is the Easter Bunny Project at Sierra Providence Children's Hospital. During this event, Easter baskets are distributed to sick children and their families. The smiles and laughter from kids, despite their illnesses, is heart-warming. Although these kids are sick in the hospital, the atmosphere throughout is so inspiring that it helped me in deciding to one day be a health care provider.

I have always known that in order to achieve my goals, I have to push myself academically. By disciplining myself since my freshman year, I know I am preparing myself academically for college. I decided early that the hard work and dedication will give me many opportunities to reach my goals. Being accepted to The University of Texas at Austin is so exciting and rewarding because it is my dream school. The dedication and discipline has paid off

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and now that senior year is quickly coming to an end I plan on continuing my hard work in college.

