

2019 Thomas K. Evans Memorial Scholarship essay

By Joseph Dryoel

The “STEM” field, as it may sound from its title, is the core of much of almost every aspect of society. Whether you are an engineer, an actor, or a babysitter, STEM fields are ever present in all aspects of any part of the workforce. However, everyone’s personal journey into discovering this is different and some never understand the importance of education in the first place. My story is a little more varied than a simple mathematician genius who has, and always will, jump with joy at the longest calculus equation available. My future in the STEM field began in the arts.

For much of my childhood I dreamed of becoming an actor like Zac Efron or Chris Hemsworth. Reality soon smacked me right between the eyes and I began to understand how impractical and unrealistic this dream is for many aspiring thespians. I wandered between many many occupation ideas for years, never quite sure what would peak my interest. I finally found my place when I stumbled into my high school's speech team my sophomore year. We were doing a piece called “The Tin Woman” and it is the story of a girl named Joy who receives a heart transplant from a boy who died in a car accident. The story then dissects the family’s grief and her depression from knowing that she lived because someone else died in her place. Like the Tin Man, all she needed was a heart, and the boy who she got it from was played by me. After taking the play to the State Competition, I began my research into this complex topic. It did not take me long before I found where my future would lie. My life was not destined in the arts like I had suspected. I found biomedical engineering, and a way to make sure the world has better options than Joy did.

Biomedical engineering, and a focus in cellular research, interested me as a student as well as a humanitarian. I could study biology, an extremely fascinating subject, while still managing to help the world by potentially aiding in organ transplant. The field I intend to enter involves the development of artificial organs and tissues so that people who need a heart do not need to wait for a dead body for them to survive. Engineering is a constantly growing field and will continue to need new minds to prosper. By studying in Chicago as I plan to, I will have access to laboratories and hospitals to supplement my research and my dreams of helping countless people in the future.

This life in Chicago is not going to be as easy as it sounds however. Ever since I was a young child I have had shortcomings in finances. My mom raised me as practically a single mother on a barely double-digits hourly wage. I was on reduced cost lunches and as a teenager I drove my car without car insurance for multiple months hoping not to be pulled over. College is swiftly approaching and my mother, who is 60 years old now, cannot afford to take out any loans to help me pay for my education. I will be paying for college alone and on my own loan debt. This is incredibly frightening for me as I will enter the workforce and the rest of my life with mounds of debt on my shoulders. I know that someday I will be helping people live better and eventually my debt will hopefully be manageable. It is this that keeps me going to school every day. It is this that keeps me studying for every test and applying for every scholarship. Someday I will change the world, maybe in a small way and maybe in a big one, but I am here to work and I know my efforts will shape the lives of the people of tomorrow.