

Tyson James

“Hold Fast to Dreams” Essay Contest

When I was 18 years old I witnessed a bad belly flop into shallow water change someone’s life forever; a man suffered a traumatic spinal cord injury. As I maneuvered a motionless, unconscious body to the sandy shore I felt helpless and vulnerable. After this experience I vowed to never feel that defenseless in a crisis again. This lit a fire in me to go to college to become an Emergency Medical Technician. I hadn’t found a purpose for college, or my life, until this. Currently, I am continuing my education at Chemeketa Community College in the Paramedic Program to serve my community in a more advanced and unique way.

Over the past six years as an EMT I have had the honor of serving our community in so many different facets. I will never forget all of the life lessons I have accumulated from patients and caregivers alike. From blowing bubbles as a volunteer at OHSU’s Pediatric Emergency Department, responding as an EMT in the rural community of Vernonia, or being a Technician at one of the busiest Emergency Departments in the Northwest, Providence St. Vincent’s, I have had invaluable guidance. I am striving to be a Paramedic because I understand the necessity to be pliable and dynamic in meeting the needs of each patient. I am so honored to be in Chemeketa’s prestigious Paramedic Program so I can achieve my dream of being a calm voice and helping hand on someone’s worst day.

The transition from EMT to Paramedic is a ten-month “crash-course” that takes time and dedication. During our winter break this year, I had my first, and also second, grand-mal seizure and was diagnosed with epilepsy. Not only was I shocked with this diagnosis and had to adjust my body to a harsh medication, but I was prohibited from driving for three months. At the beginning of the term I made the decision to stay enrolled and to persist through a long term of didactic and clinical learning. I was graciously given the chance to take a term off, but my motivation and fire inside of me to become a Paramedic was stronger than any roadblock that could get in my way. This challenge has made me hungrier to become a Paramedic and finish my education experience as strong as I can.

I feel encouraged and hopeful for the future because in this profession I will never stop learning. Education is the key to success and growth. Education has given me grit and taught me how to be a servant leader. I am rejuvenated when Senior Paramedics or Chemeketa Alumni exemplify servant leadership and return to mentor the next round of providers. College is so necessary; not only to better an individual’s life, like it has for me, but also to help and support communities. Chemeketa has given me hope and encouragement for the future because it has equipped me with the knowledge, skills, and passion to never be vulnerable in crisis again.