

When I first moved to Washington, one of the first things that really struck me was the abundance of nature right outside my front door. If I wanted to visit the forest, it was a five-minute drive away. My curiosity was piqued so I began researching and exploring my new home. I learned about earthquakes and the tidal waves they cause. I also learned about lahars and mudslides. I learned about coastal erosion and what that means for our coast lines. I watched as wildfires blazed and saw first-hand the destruction that they leave behind. All this information led me to re-evaluate the priorities in my life and I decided that I wanted to be a force for preservation and conservation.

Another factor that leads me to the path I want to follow is the fact that I have worked for a water treatment company for the last five years. In this position I have been able to learn about what our water is used for and how we go about making it safe for industry and residents alike. I believe that everyone is entitled to clean and safe water, but we must be responsible with its use in order to leave this planet better off than when we arrived for all future generations to come. It is our job now to set up processes, develop new technologies and environmentally safe materials, and to reduce waste and pollution for those that come after us. If we continue to wait, then there will come a time when it will be too late. My ultimate dream is to work for the Department of Ecology or the Environmental Protection Agency. I want to be out in the field finding areas that are polluted and need cleaning up. I want to be able to develop better processes for cleaning up the pollution and help companies who need to use water reduce their waste, and to assist them in implementing plans that will reduce environmental pollution and groundwater contamination. I want to lead the charge to clean up our waterways to preserve our most precious resource, and therefore make sure that people and animals can coexist in a clean and healthy environment.

I am most proud of being the first one in my immediate family to not only finish a bachelors' degree, but also to seek a graduate degree as well. Both my parents attended college, but neither finished. I lost my mother to brain cancer. She was being treated for lymphoma and had just gone into remission when she received the diagnosis of a glioblastoma. The doctors said that the tumor was inoperable and gave her three months to live, but she battled hard and lived for more than a year. She made the long trip to see me walk the stage to get my diploma. I wanted her to be here to see me walk for my MS, but it was not meant to be. I learned from watching her that even though it is difficult, and there is a real possibility of failure, that it is better to fight and give your all and lose than to give in and to never try. I try to live my life like every day is precious and try to learn the lessons that come my way.