

Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship

Since moving to the United States around the age of 5, I never knew I would have the opportunity to attend college, or even go to school, to begin with. Coming from a refugee background and fleeing a country ravaged by war, receiving a higher education seemed unattainable. However, going through my early education here in America, made me realize just how important attaining a higher education is. Specifically a higher education in public health.

My family is among the few lucky ones to have the opportunity to move to America from the refugee camps. They have told me many stories of life in the refugee camps. The lack of basic human necessities like running water and a sturdy house was among the many stories told to me. The lack of medical care was also one of the many problems. Listening to these stories allowed me to visualize my future in helping out groups of people in a community rather than just one on one care with individuals. The importance of getting medical care to communities and advocating for basic health needs became my drive to get into public health.

During the summer I usually participate with the Refuge Community Partnership here in Chapel Hill, as a camp counselor for the refugee and any kids in the area. This camp allowed me to educate the kids on healthier life choices and navigate them through their community to help them find resources. After graduating with a public health degree from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I want to give back to my community by using my degree to advocate for my people here in America. It is so important to me that I give voice to my people who fled their country to live another day.

Growing up in America however, was not all rainbows and sunshine. My parents divorced when I was young and since then my mom had to work multiple jobs to support me and my 4 other siblings. She wanted us to have a good education even if that meant she had to pick

up shifts or even get another job. Even with our financial problems, my mom still wanted me to attend college and receive higher education. With 4 other siblings to also provide for, I took on part-time jobs here and there to help ease the financial burden on my mom with me attending college, however, my mom always wanted me to focus on my education and not worry about the cost.