

I graduated in 2021 from Albion College with my undergraduate degree in biology. When family and friends asked me the dreaded “so, what next” question, I always told them that I wanted to help people. I had assumed that the only way I could help people was with medicine, being a physician’s assistant or doctor. Before making this leap into medical school, I wanted a firsthand experience in the medical field. Therefore, I worked for over two years as a certified nursing assistant in a local hospital in my hometown while I contemplated medical school. One thing became clear as I assisted my patients, I could see how a lack of nutrition and exercise knowledge impacted people’s health. I only had to look as far as type-two diabetics with ulcers covering their legs, smokers with stage four lung cancer on ventilators, chronically obese individuals with BMIs over 40, and many cases of heart disease to see this lack of knowledge epidemic. In each of these cases that I have experienced, they were all connected through one core risk factor - nutrition. These individuals have a rudimentary understanding of their health and may not have the means that permit them to live a clean and healthy lifestyle. I realized during my time as a certified nursing assistant that in many cases doctors were simply band-aiding the problem and not having the time or the resources to make life-altering sustainable changes in their patients’ lives. This realization and my desire to help people before they reached a critical point in their lives that required medical care led me down the path of a Master’s in Public Health from Eastern Michigan University.

As a student at Eastern Michigan University, I have served as an AmeriCorps member to aid formerly incarcerated individuals in achieving higher academia to reduce their recidivism rates, help them secure employment, and in turn, make a positive contribution to society. Additionally, I have been honored to serve the School of Health Promotion and Human Performance of Eastern Michigan University as a graduate assistant. My service centers around educating the campus on alcohol awareness, being active bystanders, and Naloxone awareness. The project I have been working on with the Washtenaw County Homeless Shelter is Naloxone awareness regarding homeless individuals. These vulnerable populations must be fairly represented as the role of public health is to guarantee that every person has access to the social determinants of health to improve each individual’s quality of life. I attended The Great Lakes Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education Conference this September and plan on attending future conferences such as the American Public Health Association Conference and future Society for Public Health Education Conferences.

While I have been able to work throughout achieving my undergraduate degree, the Coronavirus pandemic, and have been serving in several positions during my master’s program, I must lean on additional avenues to alleviate the financial burden of student debt. Being awarded the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer scholarship would allow me to focus more of my time on educating and assisting the public in their fight against preventable diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and infections to increase life expectancy, promote health and well-being, and be the driving force behind community outreach programs.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer scholarship. I hope to hear from you soon.