

November 29, 2023

I would like to say it is with great pleasure to apply for the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship. This illustrious scholarship will help address future educational and professional plans as well as a discussion of financial need. Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Jakeina Sutton, and I currently live in Durham, NC and second year Master of Public Health graduate student, at the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

Advocacy has always been a major part of my life from a very young age. And can be a crucial and critical skill, especially for minorities. Born to a young mother at the age of 18. Faced with tough adversities that allowed her to rely on faith to overcome her obstacles. In December of 1994 at the of four months old I received my first heart transplant at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, located in Chapel Hill, NC. 16 years later receiving a second heart transplant and first kidney transplant in June 2011, at UNC. You would have never known just by looking at me. Being born with a heart condition called Cardiomyopathy (Enlarged Heart) is, a genetic heart disease inherited from a deceased aunt also named Jakeina McCalop, who passed away at the age of two years old. Technology has far advanced since the 70s/80s.

Although I had a near normal life, I had to also mature faster than most people. Being that I had a major health issue I had to be responsible and learn how to advocate for myself. My mom made it a priority for us to understand the responsibilities I had when it came to my health issues. Being curious about what my health issue was about, I would raise questions and concerns to my healthcare providers. I also learned at a young age that voicing my concerns will help benefit a positive impact and longevity for my health. Educating and researching skills on how to advocate for myself, I can take what I have learn over the years and share that information with others who share common health disparities.

Creating a non-profit organization or health program I would like to cater to people who need assistance with multiple health issues or concerns; who are unfamiliar or unable to advocate. It is important that the community utilizes the resources they have available to them. Having educational resources that promote advocating from my professional perspective I know that we can change the trajectory and longevity within our communities. This is the best way I can maximize both educational knowledge and give people the confidence to raise questions and concerns about their health to promote a healthier lifestyle.