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We are all connected, it's important that we care for one another. My passion for animal welfare is hand-in-hand with my passion for connecting people from diverse backgrounds into the world of conservation and ecology. I have never doubted my passion for the animal science field. I take pride in connecting with and igniting newfound passion within the hearts of others. Everything on our ever-changing planet has a purpose, I am grateful to have discovered mine early in life; and I plan to be as impactful as I can. As a child my passion for helping animals was as simple as that: I loved animals and I wanted to care for them. However, as I matured into who I am today, my passion grew. The science behind animal care began to interest me. Anatomy, physiology, pathology, behavior, and biology became part of my passion. I decided I was going to become a veterinarian and haven't looked back since. I can't remember a day where I didn't tell anyone who'd listen about the latest National Geographic magazine I'd poured over, or about the cartoon show Wild Kratts. I realized how interconnected our world was, and I wanted to use my voice and speak up for those who couldn't. When I was 13 I decided to go to my high school, Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center (AAEC). It is a small early college high school that is heavily based in agriculture and veterinary medicine. AAEC offers a 4 year veterinary program that ends with a semester of clinicals, impactful experiential learning at a rescue and veterinary clinic. I had the opportunity to get a head start on my education and be dual-enrolled in college courses. I will be graduating with my Associates of Science this May. In August of 2021, I began volunteering as an Animal Ambassador at Estrella Mountain Community College. I had not yet gained any experience with exotic animals; with the help of my manager I learned quickly. The Animal Ambassadors are a community outreach program that advocates for conservation and ecology. We focus on educating diverse audiences that range from young children to adults of all ages. We house over 20 different species of animals including: snakes, lizards, arthropods, arachnids, rodents, poison dart frogs, and a 800 gallon saltwater fishtank. Our events include schools, churches, boys and girls clubs, festivals, and anywhere we are invited. Most notably, we have participated in the Nature Festival, the city of Avondale's KidsFest, and Arizona's annual Community College Day at the Capital. The goal of our outreach is to destigmatize the animals we have, and educate audiences on the ecological importance of all animals. We hope that giving people positive experiences with animals will encourage them to think about the impact we have on Earth more. The pandemic impacted the program severely and when I became an Animal Ambassador there was a lot of work I had to do to bring this program to a level of success we had yet to achieve. Since 2021 my team and I have revamped our enclosures, created new care sheets, and implemented practices that abide chemical and lab safety laws. I also created and managed our Instagram (@friendsofEMCCanimals) where I post our animals, our events, and list some fun facts about our animals! From a volunteer I became a two time recipient of the WIRCCS (West Valley®Works Internships Ready Community College Students) scholarship. In June 2022 I was promoted from intern to employee of EMCC. My work as an Animal Ambassador has by far been the most impactful experience of my life. I have learned public speaking and communication skills, as well as in-depth knowledge of each of our animals. Getting to care for our animals with my team has taught me teamwork and leadership skills I'll carry with me into the next part of my journey. Not only have I learned these fundamental skills from my time as an Animal Ambassador, but I discovered my passion for talking to people. I acknowledge that my future career as a veterinarian will require me to have strong communication skills with humans. Veterinary medicine is not just science and animals, but a large portion is talking to others; and I love talking to people. Participating in the Animal Ambassador Program helped me develop the confidence to pursue other opportunities within veterinary medicine. In June 2022 I was one of 12 students who traveled to South Africa to work with a

wildlife veterinarian on the Amakhala Game Reserve, and learn from game rangers at Ulovane, an environmental training camp. Working with the wildlife veterinarian, we relocated 10 male impala and 10 male zebras. To relocate the zebra and antelope we needed to dart them first. After they were down, I could treat them with antibiotics and vitamins; then quickly load them onto a truck to get them on the other side of the reserve. By introducing new males we increase biological diversity within those species. We also assisted the veterinarian in surgery on a rhino's injured shoulder. The rhino was injured after a fight with an elephant, in which he was stabbed with the elephant's tusk through the left shoulder. We had to give the wound a place to drain, treat the rhino with antibiotics and provide vitamins for the recovery. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have helped such a beautiful, yet critically endangered animal. This experience deepened my passion for wildlife veterinary medicine, conservation, and ecology. Spending time witnessing impactful change first hand increased my motivation to pursue a career in veterinary medicine, and continue to educate audiences about the importance of conservation and ecology. In my senior year of high school I have spent my mornings vaccinating, microchipping, and testing cats for feline leukemia or feline immunodeficiency virus at a local rescue. This is the clinicals portion of the 4 year veterinary medicine program at my school. I gained hands-on skills in drawing blood, animal restraint, and everyday veterinary practices. By vaccinating and testing the cats for disease, we reduce the amount of disease being spread to other cats in the community, reducing mortality. I have also volunteered at a local veterinary clinic where I am responsible for restraining animals for exams, conducting different tests on urine, blood, and feces, sending for laboratory results, and ensuring the sterility of the clinic. It has been my absolute pleasure getting to experience working with and speaking to clients in a clinical setting and I feel only excitement for my future as a veterinarian. I am proud of the work I have done, but I cannot wait to see what more I can do in the future. I hope that as a veterinarian I combine the care of animals to the more broad interconnections of the world. I hope to inspire young hispanic kids like me, who never saw role models like them in any STEM industry. But most of all, I hope I continue to play a part in the conservation of our Earth for generations of plants, animals, and people to come.

