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# RED WOLF READS 2021

*A compilation of short narratives written by first-year students based on their common reader, 'This I believe II: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women' edited by Jay Allison & Dan Gediman. The purpose of the First-year Common Reader is to promote a shared intellectual experience to engage students socially and academically both inside and outside of the classroom.*

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### **Personal Narrative - Jonathan Schaufler**

I always tell people I chose A-State because it feels like they want me to be on their campus, unlike other universities where it feels like you have to want to be on their campus. When I began my college search journey I of course knew about A-State. I grew up coming here for different band things and other events. But I kept my options open and toured other universities. Getting to tour A-State was a struggle. Whether it was being quarantined due to Covid-19 or weather I had to keep canceling my tours. But when I finally did get to come to campus, I knew this was the place for me.

I believe there was not simply one thing that solidified my choice to attend A-State but a collection of things. First is being the Sound of The Natural State; being a part of the sound is something so amazing and special to me. After auditioning, being accepted, and getting to play with the sound at Red Wolves on the Ridge I knew this band was for me. Another reason was the School of Media and Journalism. As a Multimedia Journalism student, I toured the School of Media and Journalism and instantly fell in love. Whether it be the faculty or the facilities it feels like a place for me here on campus. Finally, I chose A-State because it really has that big university-style with that hometown feel and home is where the pack is.

### **Personal Narrative - Cooper Melder**

For the longest time, I always imagined myself becoming a college football player and then going onto the NFL as my career. But things happened and I wasn't blessed with the right genetics to become 6'5 and 215 pounds of pure muscle. So going into high school I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life after high school. I wasn't motivated to do anything and I really didn't want to go to college. I was on the football team but I just didn't enjoy playing it anymore. I wasn't the biggest or the fastest. I tried so hard to get where I needed to be size and skill-wise but it was just like my body wouldn't let me. No matter how hard I tried I just couldn't gain weight. But in 10th grade I took broadcasting. That turned out to be my favorite class, something I enjoyed doing. Once 11th grade came around I got to do sports commentary which I fell in love with. I finally found my passion. Then my teacher Mr. Massey told me and my classmates about Arkansas State and how they have the best media program in the state and if you wanted a career in the media world that Arkansas State is the place for you. So I went on a tour here and toured the communications building and knew this was the place for me. So because of broadcasting and my great teacher helping me find my passion it led me here to Arkansas State. Now I am a step closer to achieving my dreams by taking sports media.

### **Common Reader - Gracen Murphy**

If I am going to be completely honest, I never thought I was going to be a Red Wolf. When I was in the 10th grade, I moved schools. I have never really been good at making friends, for I am not outspoken. Once I started practicing basketball, I made a couple of lifelong friends. I started a new relationship with a boy whom I thought I had a future with (silly me). Once the end of the junior year rolled around, I determined to follow this boy wherever he goes. So, I started getting prepared for the University I thought was my future. Then, I decided to tour A-State. As soon as I stepped on campus, I immediately knew this is where I was meant to be. Lucky for me I realized that the boy was of course not meant to be. When touring colleges, I never realized what I wanted to do. While I was touring Arkansas State, I learned about Graphic Communications. I immediately fell in love with the opportunities of graphic design and media production. I have big dreams and the future is always undetermined. But I truly believe A-State will provide me opportunities to shape my future. I have truly loved all the people and classes I have met and taken so far. I am so excited for the next couple of semesters, and to see how this university will shape me and prepare me for my future life ahead.

## **Hannah Rainwater**

Before this past year, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with my life. I knew I wanted to work in videography, but I didn't know what I wanted to do with it or where I wanted to go to college. I've always had a passion for storytelling and so in the middle of senior year, I decided to buckle down and work to become a screenwriter. I started planning a tv show and working to get it written. However, during my senior year, my dad suddenly passed away from Covid, which completely broke me down since we were so close. For a while, I wasn't sure what to do. I even debated not going to college for a year so I wouldn't leave Mom at home by herself. I eventually decided to go to ASU so I could stay close to my mother and also keep working towards my goals. Now that I'm here, I realize that was the best decision I could have made. A-State has an excellent School of Media and I've already learned so much during my first semester here. I've worked on my tv show even more and even plan to film a part of it here on campus. I've also been able to keep that close connection with my mom since I'm only a few minutes down the road. I'm so thankful for ASU and I can't wait to see what the future holds!

## **Chase Ervin**

Growing up my dad was an all-star football player in high school, at the same high school that I was going to growing up so expectations for me couldn't have been higher but instead of physical talents, I was blessed with vocal. Throughout my high school journey, I realized my voice can bring me places, where I first came to this realization was after watching the movie Good Morning, Vietnam starring Robin Williams, I started to imitate his character in that movie and from there on out any radio show host, I heard. I had the idea to work in any field that allowed me to use my voice. While going through school we would always have these things called college days where colleges would come down and set up stands to promote themselves. That's where A-State became my dream college once I heard there was a degree for people like me (Creative Media Production) and it happened to be one of the best in the U.S. there was nowhere else I wanted to go. I started perfecting my voice through school projects and anything I could find to put my voice over until I got a job in radio my senior year of high school. I've worked in radio for about a year now but with going to A-State, radio doesn't have to be where I stop, I could do anything with my voice and every day I feel as if I learn something new, I can do with my voice as a career. If I can use my talent for a job for the rest of my life, I would be a happy man.

## **Jade Upshaw**

Growing up playing basketball, I always wanted to play at the Division I level. I started the recruiting process as a junior in high school, but it wasn't until my senior year when I began getting offered by Division I schools. In March of 2020, I was asked to play on a high-level AAU team out of Dallas, so of course, I took the opportunity. All of a sudden, Covid-19 struck, and I questioned everything. The one thing I had dreamed about my whole life might be in jeopardy. The thought of coaches not being able to recruit me was terrifying, but I trusted that this all was happening for a reason. When June came around, tournaments were allowed but coaches could only recruit through live streams. This ended up being the biggest blessing ever. Through doubt and confusion, my faith became stronger. God's timing is always perfect and although I didn't understand or recognize it at the time, it couldn't have been more perfect. I ended up with seven Division I scholarships, but the school I loved the most and could see a bright future with was Arkansas State University and here I am.

## **Rebecca Ballew - Levanter**

“The levanter increased in intensity. Here I am, between my flock and my treasure, the boy thought. He had to choose between something he had become accustomed to and something he wanted to have.” - Paulo Coelho, 1988

In Coelho’s 1988 novel “The Alchemist,” the main character Santiago debates his future as he decides between his mundane life as a shepherd and his grandiose dream of traveling the world in search of treasure. While in deep contemplation, Santiago feels the Levanter (a mystic Mediterranean wind symbolizing transformation) blow across his face, which furthermore sets him on an effective journey of self-realization. Like Santiago, a blinding sense of wanderlust and a self-fulfilling need to be a part of the “bigger picture” have been the driving force of my journey thus far.

I used to view my life within my cramped hometown as a handicap to the ambitious dreams I have for my own future. But, a thirst for discovery and belonging cannot be contained inside the walls of a tiny high school. I let the days pass as I waited for my dreams to be handed to me. But upon arriving at A-State, my old eager and often impatient self has since learned that even in such a small place, compared to the great wide world around us, there can be found hope. A-State is guiding me on my journey to impact the vast world in which we live, a mere stepping stone into the great unknown. In my legend, A-State is my Levanter.

## **Austin Sweat - Follow Your Own Path**

As a coach’s son, I have had great expectations placed on me to be good at football by society. I worked to meet those expectations from as early as I can remember; however, as I grew, I began to realize that I did not have the natural athleticism or size to be good. Around the time I realized this, I started broadcasting for my high school. I enjoyed it immensely but did not think much about it as most of my time went to football. However, as time moved on, I grew to love broadcasting more, and I wanted to do it far more than football. Giving up football was something challenging because it was something that I had done my whole life. However, it was not the path that I wanted to follow, not to mention I would not be able to do anything above the high school level. So, I finally left it behind and began on my path of broadcasting. This path would lead me to Arkansas State’s incredible School of Media and Journalism, where I have even further fallen in love with my field. I have learned so much and can’t wait to grow even further. This may not be the path my family initially thought I would walk down, but it is a path I choose for myself and for which I am very passionate. They could not be more proud of me for finding my way and working so hard for it.

## **Kenya Jones**

I always knew about A-State ever since I was young. I’ve had two of my older siblings graduate from here. I even had a cousin graduate from here. So, when I first moved to Jonesboro, it was always one of my top college choices. The reason my family and I moved to Jonesboro was to be closer to doctors and medications that could properly help with my mother’s kidney failure. Not soon after, one of my sisters and her children moved here as well. She then gave birth to a son who sadly has the same condition as my mother, kidney failure. Luckily, Jonesboro is a close medical center that knows how to treat this situation. With ill family members that I’m close to, I don’t want to attend a college that was far. So, in the end, I ended up choosing to go to Arkansas State University. With registering for A-State, I figured what degree I wanted to pursue, Creative Media Production with an emphasis in cooperating media. Being at A-State will continue to shape my story. Ever since I’ve started attending A-State, many opportunities have been presented to me. Every class I’m attending is interesting and teaches me something new every day.

I'm also gaining actual experience in working media. I've got a job on campus, working the access the service desk at Dean Ellis library. Both the combination of my classes and my job is helping me to interact more and learning to communicate with others. I am naturally shy and don't like to talk, but A-State is helping me overcome that. With that, I'm happy that I chose to attend Arkansas State University.

### **Shelby Russom**

If I am honest, I chose a slightly unusual route for my life. I got married only a week after my high school graduation. This decision left me faced with many judgments and people telling me that they would not have done that if they were me and warnings that I will "miss out" on my college experience. I never once believed the people who said this to me. Regardless of the judgment, I loved my husband enough to follow through with the wedding and now I am happier than ever. I would not change this decision for the world. Not only did I fall in love with him, but I fell in love with his family. My love for both his family and mine has left me with a yearning to spend the early years of our marriage close to home. That is how I decided to stay living in Paragould, AR, and go to Arkansas State University. My decision to attend A-state was also influenced by the incredible School of Media and Journalism. The program is led by fantastic professors and has landed many students with professional jobs straight out of college. I have always appreciated A-State and the hard work they put in to make sure their students succeed in their careers. I was also offered ASU concurrent courses throughout high school that I made sure to take advantage of. I believe that the offering of concurrent classes to high school students is yet another way A-State excels in making its students feel important and helping them achieve their life goals. I am truly thankful to be a part of such a wonderful college that continuously pushes me to be my best in preparation for my career.

### **Aleighta Smith - This I Believe**

I have stayed with my great aunt every single Friday night, for as long as I can remember. It was one of our things after my mom had passed. I was the kid she never had, and I know she saw me as the closest thing she could have to a daughter. She took me on all of her vacations, and anywhere else I wanted to go. I was the kid that got it all. Life with her made the loss of my mom hurt less. I knew I was missing the mother role that all my other friends had, but everyone around me stepped into that role. Jeanne was different. She took that step in a subtle way and didn't make it obvious she was trying to take the place of my mom; she was just there. We had so many little things that we did together, that I couldn't imagine doing with anyone but her. She was my angel in a tough time.

Then Jeanne got sick. Dementia took her away before anything else could. I regret not going to visit her when I had the chance. She lit up every room she walked in, and she had the biggest heart I have ever seen. Seeing her laying in that hospital bed took the life out of me. She cried when she saw me. I was one of the only people that she could still recognize, even when the sickness took the rest. She had days left to live and I had not taken every chance I could to go see her or take every "cheesy" picture I could with her. Now as I sit here, with seven pictures of her, I tell you this: she was a big believer in the saying "enjoy it now so you can remember it later". Looking back, there are a ton of memories, but there are no pictures. She was always behind the camera because she enjoyed the moment rather than stop in front of everything to snap a picture as everyone else did. I aspired to be like her, except for one thing: I am now a big believer in "live in the moment, but always take a picture when given the chance."

## **Sydney Smith - Sydney the Cat Lady**

Until this year, I have never been much of an animal person. Sure, I've had several animals throughout my life: cats, dogs, fish, rabbits, etc. I did love these animals, especially the ones that are still around like my cat Ref, and dogs Buddy and Alley. However, it's not that I don't love them, but I don't feel the need to go out of my way to give them attention. I was obsessed with them the first several weeks, but over time, I have slowly lost that excitement about them.

In February of this year, 2021, my family and I went to the animal shelter in Batesville, Arkansas days before the huge snow/ice storm hit to look for a new kitten. My brother's fiancé, Bree, had brought home a kitten the summer before. Sadly, she passed away over in January. My family was really attached to her, so they felt lost without a kitten to play with. As we were looking through the kittens, we discussed how we wanted one that would be cuddly and playful. While looking around, this adorable light grey and white kitten walked up to us. She wanted us to hold her. This was the first sign that we knew we wanted this kitten! She also was so playful and was constantly crawling over us and playing with the toys in the room.

A few days later, my dad went and picked up the kitten, Sophie. When we got home, the first thing Sophie did was explore the house. My mom threw out a mouse to see if she would play, and she ran to it and brought it to us. This is when we discovered her obsession with playing fetch. Yes, she plays fetch. Not only does she love to fetch, but her second favorite thing to play is the monkey in the middle. She also loves to cuddle when she sleeps, which I love because I am a very cuddly person. Since we got her right when the snowstorm hit, we got two weeks straight of getting to be around her all day and night. I grew so attached to this cat during those two weeks. I am even more obsessed with her now than when we first got her. She wakes me up almost every night around 2-3 am, and I more than happily will cuddle with her. If she brings me a mouse in her sleep, I will get up and play with her. I have such a strong bond with Sophie. I tell my mom that I will never understand how I will love my kids more than her. My camera roll is filled with thousands of pictures of her: sleeping, playing, etc.

As I've started school, it has made me upset when she wants to play, but I am too busy. This may sound silly, but it has made me realize that being a parent must be hard. It is upsetting when your cat (kids) wants to play, but you are too busy. It could also be hard to balance making sure your kids have everything they need while balancing all the work that must be done. This is a long way that has also made me appreciate all my parents do for me, and I now have a glimpse of how much love a parent has for their kids!

## **Home - Shelby VanGinhoven**

Throughout life, everyone is searching for that place they can call home. Whether their idea of the home is a person, place, or thing, we all have this image in our heads of what home is. On move-in day, the first thing that I said to my parents was, "I am going to drop out." My idea of home at that point in time was my family, my hometown, and the "normal" activities I was used to doing. Coming from a school of 450 people pre-K through 12th, where everyone knows everyone, the idea of thousands of strangers terrified me. Little did I know, I was in for the adventure of a lifetime. I knew a few students when I first came here, including my roommates, so this helped in meeting others. Once you meet someone, they introduce you to their five friends, who then introduce you to their five friends, and so on and so forth. My first days at ASU went from a place full of strangers, to now a second home full of friends and family. My initial fear and longing to drop out and go back home have significantly changed to this love for this campus and the people here. ASU provides a different perspective on life and the many walks thereof. It gives you a sense of belonging. There are several organizations, clubs, and activities you can participate in to help adjust your life and get more involved. So, what is home?

From my point of view, I have two homes. The first being with my family and the people I grew up with. The second being here at ASU, with these “strangers” that I get to call my friends and family. I believe that home is a place that challenges you, yet also gives you comfort and belonging. Home is wherever you want it to be.

### **Aireona Harris - From Hate to Love**

All my life, I had always thought and assumed that I hated cats. It wasn't until this specific day when I realized that I just may be a cat lover. It was approximately a month or two since the death of my beloved dog, Max. I was very distraught about the whole situation because I had gotten Max when he was a very small puppy, with large ears. His ears were almost as big as his body, he was some sort of Chihuahua/terrier mix. He had forest green eyes and tan fur. As he began to get older the hue of the green began to fade, until his eyes were almost close to brown. After his very tragic death, I impulsively decided I wanted a cat. I had never really been around any and the decision was a spur of the moment. It was the day before my younger sister's birthday and my aunt came to pick me up. We were going to get some stuff to decorate for my sister's birthday. Turns out, she had set up a meeting with this lady to get a kitten for me. When we got there, I was very confused, but afterward, everything made sense. I was handed a small kitten, approximately ten weeks old at the time that was gray with black stripes, with accents of white and tan on the underbelly. The kitten even had socks; they weren't literal socks but all four of her paws were white. The kitten had big yellow eyes and was very much adorable. I was so happy; I had just gotten my first cat! On the way home I was asking my sisters and one of my friends what they thought I should name the kitten. Turns out both thought I should name her Nyla, which ended up being her name. I have now had Nyla for over a year, and this process of trying to figure out the many mysteries of cats has been long and still ongoing to this day. Now I have even branched out to feeding more cats that are outside, eventually, I plan on rescuing one of them, Ginger. She's got a bright ginger coat and the friendliest cat I've ever seen. I thought I was a dog person all this time but turns out I like cats and dogs both just as much.

### **Madalyn Neziri - Hard work Really Does Pay off**

I believe in the notion of hard work. I believe in working 12-hour shifts, overtime, and taking hours on the weekend. I believe this because I also believe in the magic of Christmas morning seeing the smiles on your kid's faces, so happy with their gifts and so happy to have you home. I believe in missing dinners during the week so that when the weekend comes you can spend those mornings cooking biscuits and gravy, eggs, and bacon. And waking your kids up to walk in and surprise your wife. I believe in this because this was my dad. I believe in the notion of hard work. I believe in sitting at the dining table with two little four-year-old boys crawling all over you, doing your homework for Nursing School. I believe in asking your two little girls to help you study with flashcards even if they can't even pronounce the word 'bradykinesia'. And after all this walking across the stage taking the Hippocratic Oath while all four of your children beam at you. I believe in this because this was my mom. They worked their whole lives for me, for my siblings. It paid off so well. It gave both me and my sister the ability to make decisions best for our future and understand what hard work really means. Within watching them and their hard work I saw many things and many life lessons: Love never seizes, no matter what you CAN do it, and every step you take, you are investing in your future. Hard work means to me much more than the definition itself, it means the compassionate love my parents had for me, for our family. I promise to keep believing and thrive under the impression that hard work really does pay off and I promise to always thank them for everything they have done because all of those hours working gave me all the chances for success.

## **Daeleigh Stevens**

Making Connections 6 September 2021 Personal Narrative Just like many other students, my journey to becoming a red wolf is remarkable and one of a kind. Growing up, I have always been 100% certain that I was going to attend Arkansas State University after I graduated from high school. What led me to pick ASU was simple, it is fairly close to home, and I feel like I am at home when I am on campus. After growing up in a small town, I was more than excited to move to Jonesboro to seek new opportunities, meet new people, and to be able to pursue a major in something that I am so passionate about-- social work. Due to growing up in a highly dysfunctional family, social work and the ability to help others has always been something that I have always wanted to do. Although my situation has affected me negatively at times, I am so thankful for what I have been through because it has led me to be the person I am today, and most importantly it has led me in a direction to want to help others. In just a little time that I have been here, Arkansas State has begun to shape me into the person I will need to be for the future. I am so thankful for the social work program and the ability to be able to do something I love long-term. My father has always told me, "if you do something you love, you'll never work another day in your life", and those are the words that I use to remind myself that I have made the best choice for myself here at Arkansas State University.

## **Rachel Jones - Personal Narrative**

I have always tried to strive for the best I can be, in everything and for everyone. Since this is a personal narrative, I'll share some personal things about myself. Like I said before, I strive to be the best person I can be, for everyone. Believe it or not, I was a troublemaker, I know hard to believe, right? I was diagnosed with ADD, with that disorder I used to not pay attention for the life of me, I never got good grades because I could never remember the work we had done before, I was always getting in trouble for being too loud and not 'paying attention.' I'm the middle child, and to most people that doesn't mean anything, but to me personally, it means more than you think. Being a middle child means thinking I have to compete with my younger and older sisters to get what I want. Personally, I have never felt like I have made my family proud of what I have done, rather than me having enough credits to graduate early from High School and getting a head start on a college semester, it will never be enough for me.

Fast forward to the non-sappy parts of this assignment, I believe being a Red Wolf is going to help me make my parents proud of what I am doing for them. I'm hoping being here will give me the opportunity to meet new people, study new subjects, and of course, make a few friends along the way. A-State has been stressful, already, being on my own and having to rely on myself without someone breathing down my back telling me to get my assignments done is taking a toll on me, just because I've always had that. I feel as if the Red Wolves will help me overcome stressing over assignments, stressing over if I'm making my parents proud, and mostly for myself to create a career for myself and become successful. I will go ahead and apologize I know this is twice as long as it is supposed to be but I feel like you should know how I've struggled with my ADD, and having to be on my own is taking a toll, but most importantly I'm glad A-State has a lot of tutors who can help me study and get assignments done. I feel like the Red Wolves will make a difference in my life, mentally and physically!

### **Michelle Brock - My Personal Journey**

Throughout my high school career, there was never a minute that I wasn't thinking about what college to attend, what college best fits my personal goals for myself, and also what college will give me the best college experience and education. I knew that I wanted to stay close to home, so that limited me to only a few colleges. Recently my dad's cousin, Dena Decker, went back to college here at Arkansas State University to complete another degree towards her dream job. Dena has never let anything hold her back, especially when she has her mind made up. There are several other factors that came into play when I decided to be a part of the Wolf Pack here at A-State, but seeing how Dena had accomplished many things here at Arkansas State made me want to be a part of this college even more. I have always dreamed of growing up and being able to have an occupation that involves me helping others. Not only being a student at Arkansas State University is exciting, but Arkansas State University will also help me live out my dream which is being an Occupational Therapist Assistant. There are a tremendous amount of people here at A-State that will always help me succeed in my future. I am so grateful to be a part of this college and a Red Wolf and I am very excited to see how the rest of my college experience goes as it continues.

### **Tajah Edmondson - Why I Choose A-State?**

What made me come to A-State? My whole life I have been beyond blessed. I am from a small town called El Dorado AR, A very stable home where I lived with my mother, stepfather, and brother and they made sure I never went without, and I had everything I needed, and the majority of my wants. My whole life I have had the same group of 5 friends. We did everything together and helped each other with everything in so many ways such as school, outside activities, and other things we were always there for each other. So let's fast forward to when it's our last year of high school we had fun times, and of course, we had hard times Covid was still around that made some things harder, but we all made it through and were able to walk across the field together. So now it's time for all of us have to choose our big step into the real world when we have literally done everything together with our whole life, and if it wasn't them helping me it was my parents, and as I got older I started to want to be more independent so I got my very first job at the age of 17 and was loving the facts I was able to start doing things I thought I couldn't on my own. After that, I just knew I could take down any college I wanted to even if my friends, and or parents were not going to be on my hip helping every step of the way so I choose to come to Jonesboro 4 hours away from my hometown where I knew nobody at all, but I just knew I could do it, and here I am doing it. So moral of the story, I choose to come to A-state independently because I want to get used to doing things on my own, and of course, sometimes things get hard because I'm so used to things being handed to me I had to let go and learn to become independent. I think my journey here will make me the strong independent woman I dream to be.

### **Alyssa Wood -Feelings of Being Welcomed**

Growing up, I never stayed in one house very long. In fact, there was a period of 18 months where I didn't live with my parents, at all. Now, in reality, 18 months is not a very long time. However, for an eleven-year-old, it feels like a lifetime. During that period, I experienced having to switch schools multiple times. Now for some, making new friends may be easy, but for a non-social butterfly, like myself, that has never been the case. I always felt unwelcomed and out of place.

I share this part of my story to express that I know how feeling alone and out of place can take a toll on a person's life, especially at such a young age. It is because of this, as well as the fact that I have been raising my two-year-old nephew and one-year-old niece for over a year now, that I have found a passion for helping children. Furthermore, it is because of this desire to make children feel welcomed and wanted, and the fact that I will be closer to my family and kids, that I have decided to major in elementary education, at A-State. I believe that my next four years here will help me grow into a more social person, as well as help me understand, even more than I already know, about helping children, all in hopes to one day accomplish my goal of teaching elementary students.

### **Anonymous 1**

I decided to come to A-state for many reasons. Out of the 12 colleges, I got accepted to, A-state was overall the best choice for me. Financially, it was the most reasonable since my family is middle class and with scholarships, I would be able to attend without added stress. My brother attended A-state and loved it so I knew the campus life and environment would be good and with him still living in Jonesboro, I feel safe knowing that he is close at all times. I have several friends attending A-state also so I wasn't worried about coming and knowing absolutely no one. Another big factor for me is how far away from home it is. My hometown is only an hour away so anytime I need or want to go home it's a quick drive and it isn't as expensive to drive home and back as it is for some of my other choices. I feel that choosing A-state will shape my story by giving me a great experience that I'll always remember and by providing me with great professors that care, and help their students when needed. I also think that it will make me into a better person just from what I've already learned. I've learned a number of things. One being that no matter the color, race, or religion everyone here is just trying to learn, make friends, and create a career which makes it really easy to make friends.

### **Tori Jones**

My journey to becoming a red wolf was a fairly easy decision. Most of my life has been spent in hospitals and doctors' offices. Being a sick child was never what I would ever imagine myself being and my family has always been there by my side. I decided to become a red wolf because I wanted to become more independent. I always depended on my parents for everything and they have been dependent on me as well. Going to a university that's not too far and still somewhat close to home was a good decision for me. My mom went to school here years ago and graduated and my brother is a senior here. Arkansas State University has always been a beautiful campus to me. I love the atmosphere and the campus life. Being a student at A-State I think will change my life for the better. I have made so many friends just from my first week of being here. I have joined over 6 campus organizations. I am also a women's basketball manager, a few months ago if you asked me if I would be so involved in the campus community as a freshman I would have told you no. I would've never thought that in my freshman year I would already be heavily involved in the campus. Just from how my freshman year is going I think that being a student here at Arkansas State will forever change my life. I am grateful for my mentors, my friends, and the many campus resources that we have. Becoming a student here at Arkansas State University will always be the best decision I ever made.

### **Kathryn Cason - Personal Narrative**

From the moment I stepped on the A-State campus, I knew that this would be my home. I was asked by the head cheer coach to come and look at the cheer program. I had originally planned on cheering at the University of Alabama but I realized very quickly that it was a pretty long way from home. The day I went and looked at A-State cheer I immediately felt like family. The people here were so loving and friendly to me even though I wasn't even on the team. My dream has always been to be a college cheerleader and I knew that I wanted to reach my goal and cheer at A-State. I loved the way that they ran the program and I loved the people within the program. Arkansas State wasn't close to my home but it also wasn't too far where I couldn't come home on the weekends. I have always known that I wanted to be an elementary school teacher when I grew up and lucky for me I can achieve that here at Arkansas State. I want to graduate in 4 years with a degree in elementary education and teach 1st grade. I love kids and love watching them grow, with that being said I also want to coach cheer part-time. I coach right now and I love all of the kids I coach and teaching and coaching have always been my passion. After a couple of years of teaching, I want to go back to school and get my master's degree so I can be a principal or a school counselor.

### **Anonymous 2**

When I was growing up my mom would always push me to be the best student I could be, with her being a teacher her standards for me were always high. No one in my family had been to college before me, I was the first child to want to go. I picked A-State because I remember growing up and coming to the A-State football games and I always told my mom this is where I'm going to go to college. I have no clue what I want my future to look like, I'm not sure about my major which people keep telling me that I'll figure it out and I have time, but I'm worried I won't find a major that I really like, and I don't want to be miserable for the rest of my life with a job I don't want. Even though all my worries I know that A-State is the college for me, in the last two months I have had the time of my life. College is hard, it's way different from high school but I just know that A-State is going to make me into the person I want to be.

### **Maeley Hutchins - Personal Narrative**

Before High School, my aunt took me to Arkansas State University with my cousins. She showed us around campus and I fell in love with the environment. That's when I knew I wanted to go here. A few years later my dad passed away in a work accident and I started to not care about school. My grades were dropping and so was my mental health, a few years later my mom and I started to not get along. It wasn't like the normal mother-daughter arguments, it was like nothing I did was right and I would get in trouble for it. My mom had to take over two roles when my dad passed away but when she did that she was harder on us and if she didn't want to do something she would make me do it even if I had plans. When it came to my junior year in high school I was at my lowest, no one knew how low I had gotten until my best friend helped me out and my mental health slowly became better. When it came time to choose schools I chose ASU not only because I fell in love with the campus years ago but also because my family never went to a 4-year college and I wanted to prove to them that I could.

After being here at ASU for almost 2 months I have realized how much being here has changed me as a person. I am more confident, I realize how easy it is to understand what is being taught. Being here at ASU will help me find the person I am and it will definitely help in the future.

## **Joseph Bailey - Personal Narrative**

The choice that I made on coming to Arkansas State University was solely on the fact of how good the school was, and the environment it has. Before making the decision I had multiple colleges in mind, including Arkansas University, University of Central Arkansas, Arkansas State University, and the University of Memphis. I made my final choice in late December of 2020. I ultimately chose Arkansas State because of the money and scholarships that it offered me, and because they have one of the top nursing programs in the state of Arkansas. And I knew I wouldn't be going alone, a handful of my high school classmates came here also. I am also not too far away from my mother which is also amazing. We both fell in love with the campus on our tour here.

## **Neftali Tinoko**

I was born in Chicago Heights, Illinois December 1st, 2002. My mother was 18 and my father was 19, we lived in the basement of my grandmother's house in Harvey, Illinois. My father worked at a company called Allied Tube and my mother worked at a Dental clinic. Growing up I didn't think anything of it. I thought the way we were living was normal. I went to an elementary school called Holmes School, it was predominantly black and Hispanic. My mother went to a community college called South Suburban, she took some classes there for business, but after a year of studying she dropped out to help support us. The year that I was going to turn eight years my father decided to move me, my mother, and my brother to Brookland, Arkansas, right next to the school. It was a big change for all of us. For a while, I had to get used to how quiet the nights were in a small town. When I was in fourth grade my mother had started going to A-State for a bachelor's degree in business and marketing. She would graduate four years later when once I was reaching the end of my eighth grade. Life began to change for us. She and my father started a construction company that is still running called RNR, she also owns her own tax preparing company. Meanwhile, she is working in an office for CNS here in Jonesboro. They are doing this so that I do not have to have financial struggles as severe as they did. My mother never forced me to do anything that I did not want to. I always enjoyed going to school and learning something different every day. College was always a part of my life that I looked forward to. Not only to succeed in the career that I am aiming at but something I want to accomplish in my life goals. It helped a lot watching how my mother did it with two kids and a part-time job has inspired me to go to school because my only challenge now is surpassing what my mother did. A-State has to help me realized so far that life is not going to be easy. There are a lot of challenges that our parents are no longer there to solve for us. I must solve them on my own and face all challenges on my own as well. I am going to the strong on and not give up. I will graduate from A-State with a bachelor's, and afterward, I am going to veterinary school to complete my goal in life. To have my own veterinary clinic.

## **Travia Alcorn - Personal Narrative**

There were a couple of things in my life that made me decide Arkansas State University as my dream college. Jason Lignons was a huge impact on my life sadly on October 25, 2015, he was no longer here. Shortly after that my great-grandma passed away as well. Jason always wanted me to take education seriously and we would discuss my plans for the future a lot. After he passed away, my plans kind of changed. I wanted to be close to my family just in case something was to happen. I know it sounds kind of silly I didn't choose A-State for simple reasons.

The location was perfect for me far away enough from home I can still get that college experience, but also close enough I can go home whenever I need to do so. I just wanted to be close to my family without them knowing so. It definitely feels like a family here and I come from a really small town where everyone knows each other. Everyone from Newport knows even if we don't get along if something were to happen everyone is coming together to help each other. I get the exact same feeling from A-State. I really do believe being a Red Wolf will make me want to become a lot more active in the college community. Everyone here is just friendly and wants everyone to feel welcome. I can't wait to see what my college career has in store at the wonderful Arkansas State!

### **Ashanti Smith - My Personal Journey**

My journey to where I am now has been a rollercoaster. If you met me 3 years ago I would've been one of the happiest 15-year-olds you ever met, but shortly after my 15th birthday, my whole world changed. It was a day after my mom's birthday, we were cooking for the family gathering and getting ready to spend quality time with family and friends. This day was also the day of A-State's first game and my brother wanted to go and support his friend. Shortly after him getting to town, suddenly tragedy struck. My mom and I were at the store shopping and unexpectedly got a phone call from an unknown number and then and there our world stopped. My brother and his friends were in a bad car accident. We rushed to the hospital as fast as we could and ended up beating the ambulance there. Once I saw my brother I was at a loss for words, I didn't know what to do, I felt hopeless. He was airlifted to Memphis hospital where he received better care. I was there with him for a whole week, sleeping on his room floor just so I could be in there to make sure he wasn't alone until he finally talked me into going back to school. I left him and went back to school, promising him I'll call him every day and come back that weekend and see him.

Until Friday, September 13, 2019, I got home from school, did my homework, ate a snack, and got my outfit ready for the next day to go see my brother and send him off to rehab. Then my parents walked into the house but he wasn't with them. They sat me down and told me the worst news ever. All I heard was, "He's Gone" and all of sudden I went blank and lost feeling in my body. From that day I lost motivation in everything I was passionate about including school, I lost my best friend, the only person who really understood me in just a blink of an eye, I was lost. I just wanted to get through the day, wasn't really thinking about going to college, I didn't know what to do.

Eventually, I came to my senses and realized that that's not what he would want me to do, he wanted me to be successful and make something of myself, once I came to realize that I got into the mindset of making my brother proud. He didn't get to graduate college so I was determined to finish high school and go to college and finish for the both of us, despite all the challenges and obstacles I may face. I decided to come to A-State because it's closer to my family, especially my brother. A-State is capable of molding me into a better me because it will get me out of my shell, into exploring new things and meeting new people. I'm slowly but surely learning how to adjust to things without my brother even though it was 2 years ago, it never gets easier. Hopefully, A-State will help me achieve the goals that I have set for myself and my brother.

### **Nariah Wilborn**

Coming to A-State, was a hard decision but a great decision. I got accepted into many performing arts schools around the country. But it was something about A-State and its school spirit that stuck out to me. It has shaped me into an amazing person even after the first month of me being here. Everyone around me, especially title 9 has taught me to learn to speak out for myself and I'm so grateful for that because growing up I was never a talkative person.

## **Garrett Gentry**

What Lead Me Here Growing up I was never really sure about college neither of my parents attended college and I never really saw us struggle and if we did my parents never let it be known to me. College was always mentioned in school growing up in elementary and Jr. High, but I never really started taking it as seriously as I needed to till my junior and senior years. As I started taking the act more and then preparing for it more I started seeing how much it mattered and colleges took it into consideration. One day I sat down with my counselor and started talking about careers and career paths and the best way to attack those paths. I started applying to colleges and waiting on my results, I got accepted into the University of Arkansas, Arkansas State, and Arkansas Tech. Once I had my options I really didn't know which direction I wanted to go so I narrowed it down to the University of Arkansas and Arkansas State. There were pros and cons to both and I was really stuck at a crossroads on which direction I wanted to go. After weeks and weeks of not knowing what I wanted to do, I knew I had to make a decision so I chose ASU and I feel wholeheartedly it was the right decision. I feel like coming to ASU will make me a better person all around and make me expand my outlook. Jonesboro is four times the size of my two hometowns so seeing the way big towns work and just everything it has to bring is exciting to me.

## **Laci McLemore**

I have always wanted to become a red wolf ever since I was little, we would pass by it all the time and I was like wow that is a huge school (not knowing at the time how big all colleges were) mostly because I was young and grew up in small schools, and I knew it was close to home and I would rather be close to home instead of being really far away. Also, my uncle went to A-State for college I'm not sure what year it was but I remember having his A-State band shirt and him telling me about it and how he loved it when he came, and I also loved the big clock at the library growing up because I could always hear it when we went to Jonesboro or when I and my family went to go eat Wendy's after a long day at the playground or something, it was loud there so I guess Wendy's was close to there. I feel like being an A-State student will continue to shape my story because after I get my degree in radiology then I am going to probably move to little rock and be a radiologist there and so I can tell people there about A-State and how it made me become the person I am (at that time) and how good of a school it was and recommend to kids to go here.

## **Brooklyne Reed - Everything Took A Turn**

Growing up, my dad was the main financial supporter in my family. He was also my best friend and both the mother and father figures. September 28, 2020. My father lost his life to Covid-19. At the time of his death, I was offered to be a part of a different University's softball program. However, the college was very expensive, and since I now had to pay for everything I was unable to attend there. When looking for different college options I came across Arkansas State University, which had an excellent program for the degree I was wanting to pursue. At 17 years old, I became an adult. I now pay for college, sorority life, work a full-time job, car payment, car insurance, and a phone bill. I learned very quickly that life can take a turn when you least expect it. My father always believed in me and knew I could do anything that I put my mind to. If he was still here, I know I would not be in the situation that I am in right now. However, since those situations occurred I am now the woman I am today. It can be very stressful having to juggle so many responsibilities at such a young age, especially since a lot of students here cannot relate. Overall, I am very happy that I made the decision to attend Arkansas State University!

### **Briana Langlois - Prove them wrong**

Everyone's life is different. Everyone has a plan set up for them that is specifically designed for them. While most people's lives look like normal family gatherings, home-cooked meals, and sitting around the Christmas tree opening gifts; mine wasn't like that. I had one person in my family that held us together, and once she died everything fell apart. Growing up I thought life was all rainbows and butterflies, which I quickly learned that's not at all the reality. I and my parents never got along. I was always the "problem child." I was kicked out of my home on multiple occasions, I was never good enough in their eyes. When I was buying my own car, the dealer looked at my dad and said, "Look at that signature dad, she's going to be someone someday." He laughed and said, "She thinks she is." The only thing that really mattered to me was my medical classes in high school. When I found out A-State had a PT program I was jumping with joy. When I told them about me getting accepted at A-State, I was laughed at. Even though college excited me, my parents believed I was setting myself up for failure. Since my parents are destined to be right, I have to support myself. Therefore, I quickly had to learn how to adapt to adult life. My medical classes were like a safe haven for me on the days my parents made me feel like I would amount to nothing and being told I can keep that feeling here at A-State, I quickly jumped on the opportunity. While I have no emotional support, financial support, or faith from my family; I have it in myself and I will forever be destined to prove them wrong.

### **Kaley Middleton - Personal Narrative**

When I was in 7th grade my family moved from Clarksdale, Mississippi to Jonesboro, Arkansas because of my dad's job. I was really anxious about moving because for as long as I could remember I had been bullied, so moving to a new school was really hard. I was bullied at almost every school I went to except for one. I only went there for two years, but those were the best years I had in school. Moving to Jonesboro, I hoped for a fresh start, but my classmates bullied me all the way up to high school. Even though my family told me it wasn't my fault, I couldn't help but blame myself. To this day, even though I forgive them, I just wish I knew what caused them to be so hateful. I even struggled to make friends, each time I made a friend they moved schools or they ended up hurting me, too. I eventually stopped going to that particular school and switched to an online school in 11th grade. I felt so much happier. I stayed home with my dog all day and waited for my family to come home, then Covid hit. My whole family was home every day together because of the lockdown. My family has a great bond so we enjoyed being together during that time. I think we grew even closer through that time. My family is my whole world. That is why I chose Arkansas State. Being able to stay close to home while I am in college is all I could ask for. This has been such a wonderful blessing. I have already found so much joy in being here and I can't wait for what the future has in store.

### **Anonymous 3**

My personal journey is definitely something that I would consider complicated, from a mom who didn't know how to parent to a dad who moved cross country to start a new family. I feel like growing up like this helped me to be stronger and learn how to rely on myself when it came to getting things done, but it also caused me to have a hard time showing emotion and being vulnerable. As I got older I started to take charge of my own life and my own decisions. This is one of the main reasons I chose to become a red wolf because I could tell that I would be happy in Jonesboro it was the perfect distance from home and was big enough for me to find plenty of friends. I think being a student at A-State will help me because I have never been happier than I am here, and I think it will continue to bring me out of my shell.

## **Cameran Crabill**

During the fourteen years of my schooling, I have had many experiences and many life lessons that have led me to become who I am today. My choice was obvious to me in my mind, so I decided to apply for Arkansas State University here in Jonesboro. Personally, I chose this school because it was not far from my hometown in Searcy, Arkansas. This school also had a graduate program that I was very interested in, which was the Exercise Science/Physical Therapy program.

Even after being here at A-State for about a month now, I am still just as excited as I was on the first day of school to be a Red Wolf. To me, being a Red Wolf is very rewarding because it symbolizes everything that I went through, and all of the hard work, dedication, and hard lessons that I had to learn to get where I am today as a student. This is something that I am very proud of, and it is one of my biggest accomplishments so far. Some days, it can be hard to see the future, but to think that one day all of these hard classes, constant studying, and the hard work will pay off when I have that degree in my hands is something that has and is still giving me the motivation to continue strong. The most rewarding thing in the end to me is getting my degree and starting the next chapter in my life afterward, and knowing that I worked so hard to get there.

## **Rhagan Gabriel - Personal Narrative**

Coming to Arkansas State was a huge decision for me. I always had been the type of person who wanted to go out of state for college. I have always disliked living in Arkansas, so from the age of 10, I knew I wanted to leave Arkansas. Obviously, that changed. When I was in tenth grade, I went through a horrible breakup. At the time, I felt lost, but I had no idea that my life journey was about to change. I ended up meeting a whole new friend group and a new guy. The guy was two years older than me. He was heading off to Arkansas State in the fall and I remember thinking to myself, "What a boring school." Boy was I wrong. Harlan (the guy I met), we ended up dating and I came up one day to visit him. This is the moment that I fell in love with A-State. I loved everything about it, the campus, the people, and the town. I knew that day that I wanted to be a Red Wolf. With that being said, being at A-State is going to continue to help me grow. I have already grown so much as an individual and am learning how to be an adult. As I continue attending school here, my story and journey are just going to grow even bigger. I cannot wait to see what I achieve here!

## **Cameron Dickson - What Made Me Decide to Come to A-State**

At first, I struggled to decide where I wanted to go to college, but A-State was always an option. I started talking to some friends because I knew some of them were coming here, so I decided to tour the campus. When I was touring the campus I fell in love with it. I'm also a big family-oriented person and didn't want to live too far from home. Two and a half hours was a perfect, happy medium. Having friends from my hometown here at A-State with me is also very comforting. Before coming up here, I heard many people talking about Greek life and how much they loved it, so I decided to go through recruitment. I ended up finding a home away from home with sisters who hold me accountable. I personally don't have the best ACT score and I feel like an ACT score doesn't define you or how smart you are. A-State still gave me some scholarships, which helped a lot and influenced my decision to come here. Being a student at Arkansas State University so far has already brought me so many new connections and friendships. Most of my classes are going well, but I haven't figured out what I want to major in yet. After my great experience so far, I can't wait to see what's in store for my future at ASU!

## **Tenlee Dean**

A lot of things have shaped who I am today. My family, friends, religion, and community all played a part in who I am along with just how I viewed the world. My opinions and stances have changed over the years based on me growing as a person and struggling internally with myself. I like to see the good in people; it's just what I've always done. I never liked seeing people upset and alone, so I would go over to them and offer a shoulder to cry on. Not to toot my own horn, but I do think I'm trying to be a good person. This does not mean I'm a doormat; I will stand up to people who are insulting something or someone I care about. It's just something I've always been taught when I was little as well as my grandparents telling me to stick to my beliefs and don't let anyone make me doubt them. I never knew what college would bring for me, but I knew I wanted to stay close to home, so I can see my family and pets. ASU has given me opportunities to meet new people and experience new things. I know more things are to come. I don't know what the future holds for me, but I hope it's a smooth, yet fun ride while I'm here.

## **Kori Dunlap**

In my life, there have been many ups and downs but as a Christian, I truly believe it has been for one reason. This is God's Plan. My journey through high school was rough. Freshman and sophomore year I weighed over 50 pounds more than I do now and was in a depressive state. It wasn't until I accidentally signed up for the wrong class that my life changed forever. I joined a film class where I got to learn about cameras and how the media works. This led me to be involved with school functions as a videographer and further my skills with the media. This gave me opportunities like getting the cities leadership award and even being voted in through student council with friends I hadn't had until this one event took place. My life changed right before my eyes and because of this one mess up, I now understand what degree I want to pursue in college, and what I want to chase in the future. This is my journey.

## **Jubin Timilsina**

When I was a child, I was good at football. I used to play it daily. It's my priority even I placed my study as the second priority. I had a strong passion for football. My parents also supported me with my interest in football. They always bought the necessary kinds of stuff that is required to play football. I slowly started building a career in football. But, unfortunately, I met a terrible accident. I was taken to the hospital for treatment. I got a crack on my right leg. The doctor told me I would never be able to play football again. It was a heartbreaking moment for me. I was discouraged by that. My mom who always stayed behind me always supports me. I slowly started forgetting things and getting into new life. I started focusing on my study. After I completed high school, some of my friends suggested study abroad for better education and future. And I started focusing on that. Finally, I am here with the support of my family, friends, and relatives. I am having a great experience even it is completely new for me. ASU members are like family to me and slowly I am getting used to American culture and its people. I am very far from my parents but the support from these communities helps me to adjust and makes me feel that I am never far from my parents. I am very happy to be a part of Red wolves and I am having a great experience as a student.

## **Sydney Berry - Personal Journey**

I knew what I was going to do with my life. I had planned out to the tee. I was going to have an excellent performance in everything I did and be absolutely flawless. But, along the way you realize what you think you want to do with your life, simply isn't. I realized that life isn't a competition to be the best and life is ridiculously short to think so. Life is about what you want to be, not in comparison to what other people do. So I stepped back, looked at the truest parts of myself, and decided what was important to me. I wanted to stay near my family and be happy around the people that support me. So I chose, I chose for my happiness to attend Arkansas State and become a Red Wolf. Although it wasn't my initial dream, it is my new dream. I never thought that I would stay home and leave the sport I played my entire life, but being at A-State has made me understand that I don't have to be spectacular, but I can be my genuine self. So, as I continue to learn at Arkansas State University, I know that my old journey is turning into my new journey and I couldn't have chosen better. I know my dreams will change and my personal journey will be added too, but I also know A-State will support me and help me grow along the way.

## **Haley Reddick**

The most impactful thing that has ever happened in my life was when my grandmother, Gram, was diagnosed with cancer in 2016. I was in seventh grade at the time. She had cancer for a very long time and there were times when we did not think she would survive. One night in particular she only had a 5% chance of survival, but a miracle pulled through and she ended up surviving against all odds. She was the talk of the hospital and all the doctors knew who she was because they had never seen a case like hers before. The whole journey brought me closer to God because I would lean on Him for support. Because of this, I feel that I am a better person and it has shaped me into who I am today. Gram has been cancer-free for a few years now and I will forever be grateful for God saving her that night. That experience taught me that I need to cherish the moments I have with Gram. I really wanted to go to Harding University after I graduated high school, but I decided to stay here in Jonesboro and go to Arkansas State University so that I can stay home and spend as much time as possible with Gram and my family in general. I believe that staying here at ASU as a red wolf will help me achieve that because now I will have the next several years here getting an education and having the freedom to visit her whenever I want to instead of having a long-distance restriction.

## **Brianna Brandon**

My story is quite unique, but not at all. When I was 18 months old, in 2004, my dad was killed in Taji, Iraq on deployment for the Army National Guard. Growing up without a father, I relied heavily on my mother, who became my best friend over the years. We moved to Star City, Arkansas in 2010 to be closer to family, so I attended Star City School District basically my whole life. It was all fine until high school. I had one of the worst high school experiences beginning my freshman year. That being said, I wanted to move as far away from home as I could but didn't want to leave my single mom, so I stayed in-state, bringing me to Arkansas State University. That is how I ended up attending this college. I have already met some wonderful people in the first few months, and I know that I will continue to meet more. The professors here are so helpful and understanding, and make college life great. I think A-State was the perfect college for me, and I think that I will get exactly what I need from it so I can pursue the career I have been dreaming of.

## **Anonymous-M**

After reading "This I Believe II", I have allowed myself to expand my mind and reflect on my personal journey thus far. The book has helped me to appreciate how far I have come and look forward to what will come in the future.

In my life, I have experienced childhood trauma, terrible breakups, mental health issues, and day-to-day minor issues. While there are definitely worse things in life to deal with, these hardships dramatically affected me. It would have been easy to throw in the towel and let these issues overtake my life, but I chose a different path. I chose to use each situation to grow and help others get through the same things.

Choosing Arkansas State University was an easy decision for me because I could tell this was a university that was tailored for personal growth. My hope is that being at Arkansas State will continue to shape and mold me into the person I hope to be.

## **Anonymous 4 - This I Believe**

Divorce can change a kid. From the young age of three, my parents have been divorced. The split world of going back and forth from house to house is all I have ever known. Their two completely separate lives are what I know as normal. I have known pain and love all my life, and I would not wish it on my worst enemy.

It is tough growing up in two separate homes; one was always trying to up the other. Divorced parents are always fighting for the attention of the kid. I remember specifically as a kid my dad spending way more money than he had to on my brother and me and my mom getting jealous that we would come home with new clothes or memories of my dad's house. All through my childhood, both families kept a binder of what was spent on us so that they could use it against the other. My life has been a wreck of endless battles and misery, but it has also been filled with some of the greatest adventures known to man. I cannot complain because I know others have had a worse life than me, but growing up where every second was a contest, it drains a kid. I never had anyone besides my brother to help me reflect on what our life has been.

I used to daydream as a child that someone would swoop in and save me from the strain of my world, but no one ever did. Being a social worker is all I have ever wanted. I want to help those kids that are in positions like mine know that it is not their fault. I want to help remind those kids that they will always be loved no matter what happens.

I learned about social work when I was in the eighth grade. One of my friends at the time had been struggling with depression that was induced by the household. The household that they lived in was a toxic place. They struggled to keep from drowning in the thoughts that their parents placed into their heads. Eventually, someone reported the activity that they witnessed in the home, and that is when I got my first look into what a social worker can do. I was twelve at the time and struggling to find the right words to say that could make everything bad disappear from their life. I remember sitting down one day and glancing at their wrist and feeling disappointed with myself because I could not make their life better. That day was the first time they were introduced to their social worker.

As time progressed, things gradually became worse until they reached their peak, and my friend had to move away. While their home life became worse, their mental health became better. I knew that it was not because of me and whatever idiotic words I had to say. I knew it was because they finally had someone to talk to that understood their situation, someone that could help their household. Someone that was not me but an adult and an advocate. I did not understand at the time why they had to move away, but I do now. I am happy that they got out of the situation before something drastic could happen that would be irreversible. I vowed from that day on that I would learn how to help people in situations quite like my friend. I want to be able to provide a safe space where anyone is welcome.

## Anonymous 5 - This I Believe

Poyen, Arkansas, population two-hundred eighty-seven. A town, my hometown, that was far too small for the abounding dreams I am chasing. Somehow, through years of learning that the little things in life are the most prominent, I have decided to take my appreciation to the next level. My "little things" are equivalent to only a sector of my life...but I am certain that these small aspects are the foundation of my dreams. My small hometown has shaped me in ways hard to comprehend myself. I have seen firsthand where I do not want to end up. I have also noticed, first hand, that I am capable of defying the small-town girl epitome. Instead, I choose to be an opportunist; fearless of change, aware that the world offers much more than a one-stop-light town including a school and a gas station. My background has shaped me as I mentioned, but I knew the next chapter in my book demanded more: adventure. This is the reason I chose to be a Red Wolf. October of my senior year, I toured the campus and instantly knew I wanted to be a Red Wolf. It felt like a home away from home, and I knew it was meant to be. Coming from a small 2A school, I was always somewhat jealous of bigger school students. I always felt like they had more opportunities than what was ever presented to me through my small school. Graduating with only fifty-four people, I knew I wanted to be like the bigger school kids, and get away from the same fifty-four people I have grown up with my whole life. After touring the campus, I knew the perfect mixture of my "big school" dreams and my comfort zone were perfectly intertwined in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

My compassion lies in the hands of other people, quite literally. I have long dreamt of becoming a forensic social worker. In the past, I was afraid to pursue this dream...but, now, I am convinced that this is my calling. My ultimate goal is to become the most passionate and caring forensic social worker--who admires her life and career daily. In my junior year of high school, I was faced with a challenge no teenage girl should have to face. I can easily say my junior year of 3 high school was the absolute worst of my life. This is the time I realized I wanted to become a Social Worker. I noticed the qualities I have that will make me an outstanding social worker when facing this hardship. No matter what was going on in my life or how I was feeling, I always acted happily and smiled on the outside, so people would not know I was facing challenges. I think this is a very good quality social workers need; to always be comforting and seem happy, so people will trust them no matter the circumstances. Because I acted and still act this way, people always find it easy to come to me to talk to me. If any of my friends are facing difficulties, I always find that they come to me for comfort and advice. I love interacting with people and making new friends, and I think this is a feature every social worker needs.

At the beginning of my junior year, I wanted to be an elementary teacher, but after talking to my principal about my situation, and all she helped, comforted, and advised me with, I realized that social work is where I wanted to be. My biggest dream is to work for the FBI and be a forensic social worker. I want to talk to the victims, victims' families, suspects, suspects' families, and whoever needs it. I am most interested in this type of social work because growing up I have always loved crime shows and detective work, but even more, I love helping people. Not only that, but I cannot even begin to imagine how rewarding this career is going to be. I think this type of social work is the perfect fit for me. I will love my career so much, it won't even be a job. Through my hard work and determination, I truly believe I can make this dream a reality, and here at Arkansas State University, I know it is possible. I strongly believe that here at Arkansas State, I can "become her." The girl my small town, high school self will be proud of.

## Chandler Wall - This I Believe

My mental health hasn't always been where it is today. I had an extremely unhealthy relationship in my earlier years of high school and I believe that was the stem of my problems mentally. The things that went on in that relationship were far from okay and left me with trust issues as well as anxiety and depression. I was spoken down to and treated as if I was unimportant and worthless. As one would imagine, that had a significant impact on my self-worth and image. Not having any sense of either can be extremely difficult for such a young individual. Feeling this lack of importance caused me to overthink everything anyone said to me or about me, leaving me in a constant cycle of self-doubt and causing me to feel alone in my own head. I felt alone because, in the process of trying to maintain this relationship, I changed as a person and pushed the majority of the friends I had away.

Those of my friends who were still around constantly told me that they could see how much this relationship was changing me, and not for the better. They would tell me that I needed to get out before any significant damage was done. What my friends didn't know was that I was already hurting, that my mental health had already started to decline. Getting away from this person wasn't something that I could just DO because of how I felt for them regardless of how I was treated. Reaching out to those friends was something I tried, but my girlfriend at the time would go through my phone and there were a few times where she found the texts between my friends and I, and the result of that was nothing short of both verbal and physical abuse.

I felt trapped, not knowing where to go or what to do. Feeling that way is what led to the changes my friends were seeing because I was constantly stressing about what fight was coming next, what I would be yelled at or hit for. I stopped trying to reach out and just tried to fix the relationship because I felt like a burden to my friends and didn't want to drag them down with me in a problem that I thought was all my fault. I blamed myself for all of the arguments, the abuse, all of it. Not recognizing that these issues weren't something devised of my own actions was my biggest mistake. It did not matter what I said or did, she managed to turn any of it into an argument or a reason to hurt me. I had finally had enough and ended the relationship, finding out shortly after the fact that she had been cheating on me anyways. Going through all of the aforementioned left me hurt, unaware of how to reach out for help and speak to someone about the things in my head that I was struggling with. I had a tendency to mask these struggles that caused me to be sad with anger. I was easily set off, stopped wanting to go out, and stopped putting in the effort to my school work.

Not being really aware of what depression was, I thought I just felt like every other person after a breakup, I thought I was just sad. However, sadness ends and depression doesn't really ever go away, depression is something you live with forever. Depression can be dormant at times, but it is always waiting for you to come around the next dark corner to strike again. It causes you to feel alone, makes you believe that no one is there for you and that no one cares and it is miserable. I went through this episode of depression onward of two years before I finally broke down and asked my parents for help, and it was the best decision I ever made.

The experience I had with the first social worker I had ever met indefinitely changed my life. I started to succeed in school again, I became more social, I learned to lean on my friends when I needed to, and I was able to speak about the problems I was having with them. Having such a positive experience with my counselor left a good impression about social workers in my head. I wasn't sure what I wanted to pursue as a career, but I knew I wanted to go to college.

During a conversation with my younger brother, I mentioned that I didn't know what I wanted to do. He said that I have always liked talking to people and helping them through hard times, so why didn't I look into doing something with that. My brother made a very valid point and he was right, I did enjoy helping others so I looked into careers that involved that and found social work.

I googled social work degrees in Arkansas and at the top of the results for that search was Arkansas State University. At the time I'd already been in the Cabot band since seventh grade and marched in the competitive marching band at Cabot High School and really enjoyed it and upon seeing Arkansas State University the first thing I thought about was how good their band was. Unfortunately, the band program didn't work out the way I wanted, but I was sure I still wanted to go to ASU Jonesboro due to how impressed I was with the social work program with what I saw online.

I have been just as impressed with the social work-focused classes that I am in so far, and I hope to graduate with a BSW so that I may eventually work as a clinical social worker. I would like to work with adolescents and be able to help them the way my counselor helped me; I would love to know that I had the same positive impact and helped someone to change their lives for the better.

### **Ella Scobey - This I Believe**

After reading This I Believe, I have done a lot of self-reflection. There are many different experiences and challenges that have led me to where I am today. One of the biggest experiences, and definitely the most challenging, was losing my leg.

I was born with a condition called Neurofibromatosis Type 1. This condition causes tumor growth on nerves, skin, and other parts of the body. This condition also causes pigment of the skin, bone growth issues, and many different health issues. In 2014, one of the tumors that had been growing in my ankle became cancerous. Luckily, the doctors caught it in time and were able to remove it in time, however, a year later it grew back. At this point, the doctors decided amputation was the best option. At the time, I was only 13 so hearing news like this was absolutely terrifying. I was scared, sad, and above all I was angry.

It has been five years since my surgery and I do not all regret the decision to have it. Although I still have my bad days, I am much happier and content with myself and wearing a prosthetic. When I look back and think about the 13-year-old version of myself, it hurts. This feeling and the experience behind it is what led me to Arkansas State University, more specifically into the Social Work program here.

Throughout my life, I have been in and out of hospitals. Through all of the different tests, surgeries, and appointments, I would meet with different social workers and counselors. These people helped me through a lot and made the scary times a lot easier to deal with. They talked me through problems and always had ways for me to cope. I decided to go into the social work field because of this. I want to work in social work or counseling in a healthcare setting. I have been on the patient side, so I feel as though I can better help and relate to them. I want to use my experiences to help those who might be dealing with similar issues. I chose Arkansas State because I wanted to stay close to home while still getting my degree. I felt as if the program here was great and would help me get to where I need to be. I hope that over the next few years I continue to learn and go further into the social work program.

## Jadyan Watson - This I Believe

I am a red wolf, and this I believe is how I came to be a red wolf. When I was younger I had no idea where I wanted to live in the future, and I never even thought about where I wanted to go to college. All I ever worried about is when recess was when lunchtime was, and when nap time was. As I got older I started looking at things like career options, college and started having an interest in what my future would look like. This started about the time my older sister, who is six years older than me, started looking at colleges. She had no idea where she wanted to go. She toured numerous colleges and researched even more. Then she found Arkansas State, and she fell in love with it. The campus, the environment, the academics, the faculty, everything was what she was looking for in a college. She was in the Honors College, ROTC, Delta Zeta, and many other organizations, she had a wonderful college experience here.

She graduated from Arkansas State in December of 2019. This was two years before I would graduate high school. So when I started really figuring out what I wanted my future to look like, I knew what I wanted. I knew that Arkansas State would be my home away from home. I never had any doubt that I would love it here just as much as my sister had before me. I knew that Arkansas State had everything I would look for; kind people, a beautiful campus, incredible academics, and a plethora of opportunities. This I believe is how I came to be a red wolf.

I am a future social worker, and this I believe is how I came to be a future social worker. When you're a little kid everyone asks you what you want to be when you grow up, you give them an answer like doctor, astronaut, princess, or athlete. These aren't very realistic but your parents always tell you that you can be anything. Well as you get older, people expect more mature answers, mine was a teacher. Not just any type of teacher but a special education teacher. I was also fascinated by the thought of helping people of special abilities. This was my answer for the longest time, then when I hit around age fifteen or sixteen, I no longer wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to be a nurse, I would still be helping people but teachers don't have good benefits in America and aren't treated like I wanted to be treated in my workplace. So for about two years, I wanted to be a nurse, I wanted to work trauma in an ER. Then suddenly one day during my senior year, I changed my mind again, I partially blame the Coronavirus for this. It made me change the way I viewed a lot of things in my life including my future. At this point I had no idea what I wanted to do, the only thing I knew for sure was I wanted to help people, I wanted to make a difference in someone's life. I looked at lots of options, I looked into physical and occupational therapies, I looked into psychology and sociology, but none of them exactly fit what I was looking for in my heart.

Then I asked my older sister what she thought, I told her all of the things I was looking for and everything I wanted to be able to accomplish. She suggested that I look into social work, she believed it fit lots of the criteria that I had in mind and she thought I had lots of good characteristics that would be used as a social worker. I researched it and realized it was exactly what I wanted to do, social work has such a broad spectrum of areas you can work in from child welfare to mental health care, to judicial work, there are so many opportunities. The best part is that you're never stuck in one area, you can change it up when you feel like you need a change, and the days don't get tedious because you can change things whenever you feel like you need to.

Social workers must be compassionate, good listeners, good at communicating, organized, calm in stressful situations, patience, culturally competent, and respectful to all. Everyone is important and everyone has a purpose, sometimes people may have problems thinking this, as a social worker it is your job to find resources for those who feel this way. You must be empathetic and understand how others may feel in hard situations when they feel that they have no control. You must help them understand that they are in control of their lives and it is up to them to determine whether they want to make a change.

I believe that I have qualities that will make me a good social worker. I believe that I will be able to help others in need as a social worker, and that is all I have ever wanted to do. I want to work with children and adults alike, I want to work with people who have had experiences that aren't ideal, I want to help them through these times in their lives and give them the resources to make it easier.

I hope to work with families of domestic violence and also families with children of special abilities. These are the areas I hope to get to work in because people of special abilities and needs have always held a special place in my heart and they sometimes are overlooked or put on the back burner but I want to make sure they feel like they are just as important as everyone else. I want to work in domestic violence because for lots of people this is a touchy subject and most people don't want to talk about it but I want to be the person that speaks up about it and makes it something that people aren't afraid to come forward about. There are so many cases in which someone is stuck in a situation of domestic abuse or violence because they do not have any resources to help them or they are afraid to speak about it because of the stigma that may follow. They are afraid to speak about it, sometimes because they believe they are the cause of it but sometimes they think no one will believe them. I want to change this, I want people who are in these situations to have an outlet and I want to be that outlet. This I believe is why I will be a good social worker.

### **Tyler Kelley**

Growing up my parents raised me to be respectful, kind, and loving towards others. I came from a humble background and I was low middle class. I was one of those kids that didn't get everything I asked for, but I never complained and worked for what I wanted. Due to this, my journey is shaped through work ethic and the satisfying feeling you get when you earned something you really wanted, whether that is a toy, car, the new gaming system, or anything you really want. Moreover, my journey to being a Red Wolf here at Arkansas State University was pretty simple. This was the only school I applied for and honestly the only one I wanted to attend in the state of Arkansas. This journey I have been on has enabled me to have a 3.9 GPA and a 22 on my ACT. The university accepted me almost immediately and I felt a sense of pride because the work I put into getting good grades in high school paid off. Once again, I felt satisfied, but I am still not completely satisfied because I want to do well in college and graduate with a bachelor's degree, then earn my major. Furthermore, being a student here at Arkansas State University has challenged me to the point that it is shaping my journey more in-depth. The university has challenged me to adapt to the workload college gives you. This is pushing me to work harder and be better.

### **Daniel Steele**

My journey has consisted of hard work and where that can lead you. I have seen hard work all my life and how working hard at the moment leads to a better time in the future. I would have nothing right now if it weren't for hard work. As a kid, I used to not get new and nice things but now I can because of hard work. It can lead you to the most successful future you can have not only in income but in happiness. I was able to work hard through high school because of the encouragement from my parents to have a higher education than them and be able to have a job where I don't have to worry about money. I know exactly how I want my future to look and because of this, I know it is important now to go to college at A-State where it is my decision to work hard to fulfill the blueprints of my envisioned future. All of this has led me here at A-State where this is finally the start of my future.

## **Shelby Jo Hancock**

Believe in yourself and stick to what you want. Coming to Jonesboro was definitely not my plan in the beginning. I wanted to go to a community college and be simple, but everyone started to tell me it was because of my ex and that I only wanted to stay around for him, plus my mom started to push me and tell me it would be so much fun and that I would have the best time of my life. I can't say she was wrong, but it definitely is not what I expected. I enjoyed the college experience for maybe two weeks and after that, I was done. I was ready to be home because my morals and other people's morals here were not the same. I'm introverted anyway so it's hard for me to want to go out and meet friends. I would go home on the weekends and I would recognize I was happier at home than being in Jonesboro. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad I tried out a big college and now I figured out that a smaller community college living with my sister would be overall better for me and my mental health. I would be comfortable and at home. Home is where the heart is so don't ever believe your parents when they say that. Like I said in the beginning, you have to believe in yourself and believe that your inner self knows what you want and what you are ready for. Stick to YOU. Don't let anyone influence or tell you what to do because of an ex, or friends. Believe in yourself and that you can be your true self where you are comfortable and don't do anything until you're ready.

## **Eli Campbell**

It was a chilly Saturday morning in fall 2015 in Jonesboro, Arkansas. 13 year old me and dad wake up early and rush to Centennial Bank Stadium to get a spot ready for tailgating. With the sun peeking through the stadium, the smell of the burgers cooking, and the anticipation that a fun-filled day was ahead, I knew one day I wanted to be a Red Wolf.

Once the senior year of high school finally rolled around, I was ecstatic to apply for Arkansas State and finally be able to become a Red Wolf. All of my friends were scurrying around trying to get accepted into the schools that were biggest and farthest away from their parents. However, that was never my intention, I knew exactly where I would be attending when it was time to hit the books again.

August 24, 2021, was my first day of freshman year at A-State. I was really excited to finally be a part of the Pack. My nerves were running wild that morning and I did not sleep well the night before. All I could think about was how my first day of school would turn out. I got to campus an hour early and easily found all of my classes with the help of the faculty. I even got to have lunch in the cafe with one of my buddies. Once classes were over and I was driving home I was slightly overwhelmed with all the information I was just given but I knew it was going to be a great year with new opportunities, experiences, and many new friends. 13-year-old Eli would be smiling ear to ear.

## **William Brown**

Ever since the 7th grade, I was in the school band. I feel that this played a major part in my journey to becoming a Red Wolf. Throughout my time there, I met some really cool people that I connected with for years. I made some really good friends, many of whom I still talk to today. Throughout my time in the band, I attended many band competitions, football, and basketball games. I would have a lot of fun talking and messing around with my friends there. Now, in the A-State band, I have attended many more football games. I talk to friends and scream my head off when something that I think was good happened on the field (I don't really know how football works). Those memories I had of fooling around in the high school band still live with me today. I could not imagine what high school would have been like if I hadn't been in the band.

## **Triston Jackson**

I believe in destiny... that everything happens for a reason and everything will end up exactly how it is supposed to be.

I believe that my journey in foster care taught me that not all change is bad. I believe that growing up in a low-income household taught me that I can create a new life for myself. I believe that my high school best friend betraying my trust taught me that people aren't always who you think they are. I believe that working hard for the things I have in my life taught me to take care of my possessions. I believe that experiencing so much death has taught me to never take my time with anyone for granted. I believe that the glass is half full and the grass is greener on the other side. I believe it is better to see the beauty in things than sulk in dark circumstances. I believe that there is a bright side to every situation if you take the time to find it. I believe that every single hardship I have suffered is what has shaped me into the very person I am today.

I believe that being captain of the dance team taught me to believe in myself. I believe that attending a dance camp at Arkansas State taught me that there's more to the world than my small hometown and community college. I believe that this experience led to my decision to attend Arkansas State. I believe that Arkansas State will help me achieve my dreams of becoming a pharmacist and building a better future for myself. I believe that every belief will help me through the good and the bad on my new journey and that I'll continue to learn what else I believe along the way.

## **Jackson Fletcher**

I was born in Jonesboro. I have lived here my entire life. I haven't spent more than one continuous month more than 25 miles away. Regardless, from an early age, I have always wanted to travel. I was obsessed with space. My room was decorated with posters displaying the planets and facts about them, about the enormity of Jupiter, to the scorching hellscapes of Venus, to the fact that Pluto is smaller than some countries on earth. I, like many young children, wanted nothing more than to be an astronaut. As I got older and I entered my teens, my interest shifted to earth, and the diverse and amazing countries of the world. My want to become an astronaut translated into a passion to become a pilot, and I began taking flying lessons in hopes of eventually seeing the world I read so much about. I started at A-state to begin taking steps toward becoming a pilot. I hope that my journey towards my goals is well aided by my time at A-state, and I look forward to what it has in store for me.

## **Drew Walker**

The first noteworthy event I remember happening in my childhood that really shaped who I've become was losing my Dad to cancer at the age of seven. Definitely not the happiest way to start my story, and it came with its fair share of challenges. Even now nearly eleven years later I still think of and miss my father often. He was the kindest, strongest, most loving man I've ever known, and I was lucky to have him as a Dad for the time that I did. Losing him was hard, but like all tough events one may go through, it made me stronger. Then when I got older and got to high school, I joined our school band program, where I made friends and gained experiences that I simply wouldn't be who I am now had they not been in my life. Because of them, I grew into a more empathetic person, and I decided that whatever I end up doing with my life, I want to be able to help those around me, like how they've helped me. This goal is what led to me becoming a Red Wolf. In my time here, I've been lucky to meet even more friends and professors who continue to inspire me to improve, and I hope this continues in the future.

## Lacey C. Delk - The Lost Pup

I have had so many great memories with my best friend, my nana, Tina Long. One of my favorites would be camping in the backyard. She would have the whole day and night planned just for her grandchildren. We would fish in the neighborhood ponds for hours, climb trees till our hands would be raw or until we fell out. At night we would get a five-gallon bucket of any color and go frog catching; when we caught all of the frogs my Nana would set up tents, blankets, and a bonfire for a backyard campsite. We would watch the stars and cook s'mores and hotdogs. For drinks, she would have those little barrel juices, bug juice, and Capri Suns. My best friend left me twelve years ago.

She was always a family person. When it came to family, Nana was always there and normally the first person planning things like cookouts, and games everyone played. Horseshoes were and still is my family's number one game to play. They get so competitive in a good way and could play from morning till they could not see the sandpit anymore because of how dark it would get. We kids would try to play with adults. We would have to get about half the throwing distance and get some help to throw the horseshoe onto the metal post. Since we were slow at playing horseshoes we played hide 'n seek, red rover, or pop the popcorn on the trampoline. Pop the popcorn was a game where one person would sit crisscross applesauce in the center of the trampoline while everyone else was jumping on the trampoline trying to get them to pop open from holding their legs to their chest. We would play these while our food was being grilled. We ate bratwurst, hotdogs, and burgers. Most of the time the adults would drink at the cookouts and watching them would be hilarious.

I remember specific times when my Nana, my cousins, and I would play together; our Nana would say "IT'S COW LICK TIME", or "IT'S TICKLE TIME". Cowlick time was when she would hold us down and yell cow lick time and lick us straight in the face or sometimes all over. Tickle time is when she held us down with our arms above our heads and got her chin and dug it into our sides or armpits. I peed my pants one time laughing too hard.

The love she had was given to everyone. No one ever felt not loved by her. When it came to my Papa and Nana they were perfect for one another. They were always happy, loving and she knew how to keep him in line if he needed it. I have never seen a better relationship in my life. My nana was a family person. She was the root of our tree and she handled everything strongly. My Nana was the backbone of everyone in the family.

The only thing I have left to remind myself of her is an old brown and off-white bean bag wiener dog with medical tape on one of the back legs to keep the beans from falling out. The size of the bean bag dog is not very big, it could fit in one hand. My nana personally gave this to me. If something bad was going to happen to me that bean bag wiener dog is going down with me. I'm glad I have something physical to remind me of all those memories of her and the old days.

The beanie dog reminds me of her and what she went through like family, sickness, and a car wreck. If anything traumatic was going to happen to where I would lose that dog I would risk my life to save something that could not breathe.

The bean bag wiener dog reminds me of the hard times she went through. As I got older, around five years old I started noticing that she was not doing well. I noticed something was wrong, but I was too young to understand the sickness. I would watch my best friend sit on the couch in the living room watching Hank In The Hill or Winnie The Pooh covered up with a refrigerated glazed donut and a tall glass of milk that would sweat because she put ice in her milk. She would fall asleep sitting up with the donut half-eaten and half a cup of milk in her hand tilting to the side because she did not have the strength to finish it or stay awake. I would wake her up saying "Nana, Nana you're going to spill your milk; are you okay, do we need to go to bed" or "Nana you haven't finished the donut" and her response was "Pumpkin Butt I am fine and I am fixing to finish it."

I was young, but I understood that something was very wrong. It broke my heart. My mom later told me she had Cirrhosis of the liver, and Hepatitis C from a blood transfusion and she was not doing too well. Right then something inside of me dropped. I felt so bad after hearing that; like it had torn me in half. Since I found that out then I was inseparable from her. If my parents wouldn't let me stay the night, my eyes would be like a rain forest; I would not stop crying until I got to go with her.

One morning before school on October 19, 2007, around 7:30 a.m.; I was in first grade on the bus on my way to Westside Elementary School. We passed a wreck and noticed it was my Papa's rustic orange truck. It was wrecked where both the tires turned outwards and the front end was smashed in and the hood was crumpled up. After I arrived at school not even an hour later my little brother Joseph and I were checked out and went straight to my Papa and Nana's house. When we got there my Papa was in tears and I didn't understand because he was fine from the wreck. He told me that it wasn't him, it was Nana and that she was not going to be coming back to us or home, and that she was in a better place and healthy. Immediately I had tears running down my face, I bawled my eyes out and I said "why couldn't they have taken me instead of her, it's not going to be the same."

At the funeral she looked so normal, they fixed her up beyond great because her face was bloated and purple. She looked so alive and normal. I asked my mom if she was going to come back and bite me if I kissed her forehead.

The whole family changed. No one came around for cookouts, bonfires, or horses. It felt like everyone separated and abandoned one another. My Papa got remarried but still seems unhappy or not as happy since she passed. It seemed to me he lost his best friend and a little of the family man was lost. Even though he got married again it does not or will not be the same.

This beanie dog reminds me of the good and the worst. My Nana was a big-hearted, stern, and most caring woman I had ever known. I would do anything to see and hear the sound of her voice again.

## **Mia Breaker**

"Zoom out": a phrase that I use rather often which has always comforted me and my loved ones in times of sadness, stress, and anxiety. The meaning of the phrase is simple; to change your perspective and look at life as a whole. This allows you to question whether your worry is valid, or if you are zoomed in too far. Although, the significance of this phrase for me is not its literal meaning but rather where it originated in my life. I learned to put life into perspective the hard way; by having a gun held to my head. When I was 15 years old, I was encountered by what will go down as the most influential and traumatic event of my life. I was subject to a home invasion. The first lesson that came about, looking back, is that anyone would be willing to throw their material possessions out the window if it meant they'd be spared their life. This makes life easily worth more than money, or any material thing for that matter. After all, if you were offered a million dollars but the catch was that you would not wake up in the morning, would you take it?

Fast forward to later on the night of May 18, 2018, I was shot three times in the chest, mouth, and face. I suffered extensive injuries to my lung and one bullet missed a major blood vessel by half a centimeter. I was taken to the hospital where I underwent surgery and spent a week in the hospital recovering from my injuries. Physical recovery was difficult, of course, but recovering from hearing the words "I'm going to kill you," and believing it, was even more difficult. This put life into perspective for me, as almost dying would for anyone else. Just a few hours prior to these events, I was crying about getting my first B in my algebra class in high school. The trivial things that we concern ourselves with are so insignificant in the grand scheme of life. None of us know how much time we get. Seek beauty in every situation, tell people you love them, and take a second to "zoom-out" every once in a while.

## **Joshua Guntharp**

Being a red wolf is a huge part of my life. Since I was a little kid my dad and I would watch football games together and that was one of our main forms of bonding. Then we were sitting getting lunch one day and he explained to me that the Arkansas State football team was changing their name and if I wanted to go to the game with him and try out an actual football game in person. We went and have been regular attendees ever since. We were immediately embraced by the atmosphere Arkansas State provided. Over the years we became more involved in the Arkansas state football experience. We went from testing the waters to tailgating with other fans and friends to now we are season ticket holders and go to every single game. Seeing how not only just our small family would rally around the football team but the entire city of Jonesboro was a true wonder to see. This experience alone and the memories that this school provided in this way is what led me to join the red wolf family. Being a red wolf is more than being just a student in a building with other students. When I became a red wolf I was inducted into the massive family at Arkansas State. Professors care and will help you as much as they can. They strive to put you on the best possible path to achieving your life goals. Thank you Arkansas State for giving me another family to call my own.

## **Jana Tarter**

Most of my life has been dedicated to school and academics, and since I am a very quiet person who loves to read this always seemed like the path I was meant to take. However, struggling to discover what I am truly passionate about and what I really want to do with my life has been a huge issue that I have been facing for the past couple of years. Going through burnout during high school and not being able to identify what was happening to me was another issue I had to handle, made infinitely worse by transitioning to online schooling during the pandemic, and trying to find a college during these ongoing uncertain times was nearly impossible to force myself to do. I was not in the state of mind needed to make such a major choice, and spent most of my senior year of high school refusing to think about college at all, all the while knowing that it was really the only option open to me, considering who I am as a person. I'm still not sure what led to me becoming a Red Wolf, perhaps it could have been the extensive list of interesting majors and minors that rekindled my love for school, but in any case, I'm so glad I ended up here. Coming to A-State has made me excited for life again, and the life I'll get a chance to build from the experiences and education that I know I am sure to receive here.

## **Dylan Stark**

I am not that interesting of a person. I am about as average as you can get. I grew up fairly middle class in Batesville, AR. I am an A and B (with the occasional C and D) student. I play video games with my friends in my free time, and I love my family. I am not exceptional, and I don't necessarily need to be. I joined the army at seventeen in between my senior year of high school and freshman year of college because that is the only thing I have ever wanted to do. I am a part of the A-State ROTC program, and my experience with the program has been wholly positive. I love the campus and all of the professors that I have had the pleasure of meeting. I am glad that I have the opportunity to call this campus my home. I am really looking forward to the rest of my time here as I believe that it will bring nothing but positives into my life.

## **Christina Smith**

In August of 2021, I officially became an A-State Red Wolf. But becoming such was not an easy task. I had to overcome many obstacles to get to where I am today, but I had one major characteristic that helped me with that: passion. While I am not going to write my whole autobiography in this short essay (though, being famous enough to be able to write my own autobiography would be pretty cool), I am going to highlight how this passion shaped who I am today: an A-State Red Wolf. Since I can remember, I have always been a very passionate person. I've been on the Cabot High School Debate Team for 4 years and am now on the A-State Debate Team. I've organized protests at my school such as March for Our Lives, have attended protests in the state such as BLM, and have become a strong activist for minority and women's rights. These events have helped my passion (and I suppose you could say my habit of being very argumentative) become what it is today, and I believe that is what helped me become a Red Wolf. I remember receiving my acceptance letter for this amazing school, and I knew right then and there that my hard work, my passion, had paid off. I hope that being a student at A-State will help me shape my story through my passion even further, whether that be through the Debate Team or through my classes. My story is only beginning.

## **Alandria Maddox**

For a while, I didn't plan on going to college. I didn't feel I would have many purposes being at a college and I didn't know how I would afford it even if I did. I have always felt as though I was good at many things but never great at something. I still feel like that sometimes. Growing up was very challenging because it seemed almost all of the people surrounding me had talents and gifts I felt I was incapable of possessing. However, I would say due to comparison, I missed hundreds of opportunities to discover something new.

There are so many different aspects to my life that have all led me here but the most dominant one is Christ. I know he led me here and this means I will serve an important purpose. I am unsure how my purpose and my future career align but I know they will. I think being in college will finally put me in the position to really focus on what I feel I want and need to do and also to discover new things about myself and others.

Growing up, I had several teachers and family members that always encouraged me and told me I was going to do great things. I found myself turning that encouragement into peer pressure to always do the best at everything and become some millionaire by the time I'm 20. As an adult, I realized I don't need to be the richest or have the most degrees in order to be the best. The only way for me to be the best is to be the best me I can be and never stop growing, and that's what they meant all along.

## **Aurora Greenhaw**

I have always had raging anxiety in my head and body. Always been too scared and too nauseous to change things, to move things, to involve myself in the conversation. Spent most of my days quiet, in silence, because I was afraid. Afraid of stepping out of what I know and talking to that kid in my class because what if they thought I was strange. I was too afraid to rearrange my bedroom because what if I forgot where something was. I was too afraid to go to a college far away because what if I couldn't make it alone. That is how I ended up here at Arkansas State. A forty-five-minute drive. A safe distance and call away from home. I hope this place aids me. Helps me grow. Maybe it'll take that fear from me and replace it with courage. Maybe it'll make me into the strong girl I was meant to be, but couldn't carry out.

## **Miles Richard**

My journey to becoming a Red Wolf. Isn't the most dramatic or exciting of tales. Obviously, I don't have any sort of superhero back story like being sent down on the earth from Krypton but that's completely fine. My story is simple, It begins with my family. My family has since always instilled the value of education in me for as long as I can remember. My aunts are both teachers, my grandparents were teachers, and my great-grandmother was a teacher.

It's a miracle that I haven't decided to go on and become a teacher! But this has served as my inspiration to continue on the path that I am currently on. Their support led me to where I currently am today as a Red wolf. As a student here at A-State, I will continue on with the lessons they've taught me and cherish my education. I since came to love learning and I hope my presence here at A-State will serve to help me seek my purpose and the importance of family. Ideally, I want to pass on the values to others whether they'll be my children or if they're just everyday people that I might encounter. My father along with many others has stressed the importance of giving back to the community. That also seems to be a common theme amongst the various scholarships I have received. I find it only acceptable that I too should set aside time to help and encourage others to grow and develop into the person they want to be.

## **George Baker**

My own path has been filled with laughter, heartbreak, and all the other emotions that we all go through as humans. Everyone has their own "journey," and they have all lead us to be Red Wolves, in my opinion. Some people have done it by the seam of their pants, while others have meticulously planned their lives. In the end, red wolves are shaped by grit and perseverance. Being here with all of the other students has led me to believe that those two characteristics are what have gotten me to where I am now.

## **Austin Booth**

My life has been a compilation of love, work, and hardships that have shaped me into the person that I am today. I was brought up in the Arkansas delta with small-town southern values and taught that hard work trumps all other things. My parents provided an environment full of love and support, which is something I will forever be grateful for, as many children don't receive that in today's world. I worked my way through school trying my best and always coming out with good grades because of the amazing support system I had at home. I had some early life challenges with poor eyesight, asthma, and an early childhood house fire. These things taught me very early on the value of life and why things should be cherished while they are a part of one's day today. As I grew I felt myself becoming more curious about the world, I was obsessed with history shows and books and anything related to records or documents that told me about other people. This passion formed a very empathetic mindset within me that allowed me to connect with others on a deeper more personal level. As I entered high school as I tended to do I looked to my dad for the answer to where I should go next. I had a passion for people and history and following his amazing example I chose A-State as my future educational home as it represented not only an amazing educational institution to further my passion for history, but it also represented family to me in a way. The university was a symbol to me of my father and the hard work he put in to instill good morals in me as well as the work he put in to provide a good life for me, and there is nothing more I want in this world than to achieve those same goals.

## **Major Hart**

I was never interested in school and spent lots of my grade school years suspended. The school was really boring and I hate control systems, so I would act out knowing exactly what kind of trouble I'd get in. However, my history and English teachers always supported my academics, and I did very well in their classes. I graduated with a pretty low GPA because my Math and extra-curricular grades were horrible. This wasn't a big deal to me, because I wanted to join the military anyway. I had no direction in life, so naturally, I chose the Army National Guard because they offered me \$20,000. I had no intentions of going to college until I realized how much I missed my home state during basic training. I needed something to force me to stay here, so I applied to Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. As much as I hated grade school, I loved history classes, so I joined the Social Science Major in hopes of becoming a high school history teacher myself. My struggles in school had passively influenced my decision because I wanted people to like me to actually enjoy school. Being a red wolf here at A-State will help me achieve my goals, and show all my doubters from grade school what I'm capable of achieving.

## **Morgan Sweeney**

College has been something I've aspired to since I was in elementary school; everybody around me reinforced this. My parents and teachers built me up and prepared me for this place as best they could. It wasn't always pleasant, my dad especially has always pushed me to be the best I can, and plenty of teachers over the years pushed me to my limits with tests and homework. My senior year I scrambled for scholarships and picked ASU so that I wouldn't have to be too far away from my family and friends in Paragould. I'm sure here at A-State I'll end up facing greater challenges than I ever have before, and I'm hoping it builds up my character even more than everything up until now has. Already I feel more of a sense of belonging here than I did in high school, I know that over the years here I'll make friends that will change my life profoundly, and the friends I already have will grow with me, and help me grow as well. I've gone into A-State hardly feeling like an adult, but I know I'll leave here with all the tools I need to make it out there on my own.

## **Emily Brannon**

I grew up in a household where education was highly valued. My parents were both first-generation college students here at A-State and they really paved the way for me in achieving my higher education. My mom is an immigrant and my dad came from a small town with less than 300 people where he and his family lived off of food stamps and their farm. Due to my parents' backgrounds, they understood what hard work was and what it took to build a life for themselves. As I was growing up they instilled the values within me and made sure I understood that life was truly what you made it. That is why I am here today; I have a life I want to succeed in just as my parents did all those years ago. A-State was an obvious choice for me because I am a Jonesboro native, therefore I grew up around the culture. Once I finally landed on my desired career path I was even more so ready to attend A-State. In these next four years, I want to grow as a person, student, worker, daughter, sister, etc. I want to find out the kind of adult I am going to be and being a Red Wolf is possibly the largest stepping stone of that process. So in saying that, thank you A-State for what you have done for my parents and I cannot wait to see what being here will do for me.

## **Jk Johnson**

In high school, I wrestled and from the time of the start of my sophomore year till the end of my wrestling season my senior year all I wanted was to wrestle in college at Lyon College. I had gotten scholarships to wrestle for them as well as an academic scholarship to attend. After my wrestling season my senior year, I decided that I no longer wanted to be a history teacher and that I wanted to be a lawyer. Since you can't go from high school to law school you need a 4-year degree that will help you get into law school. I decided that if I wanted to make the grades necessary to attend law school I would need to spend most of my time studying and not working out/practicing. This ended my wrestling in college dream but as I was looking into different colleges and my parents recommended A-State, where my mother is an alumna. I visited the campus and seeing as I was only two hours from home and it was a decent size school I decided to enroll. Once I moved onto campus I found multiple clubs and associations to join if I wanted and I definitely think the ease of access to these groups will definitely shape my life moving forward. The connections I have access to here at A-State will propel me in my later life, and in turn, I will hopefully be able to do the same for other alumni.

## **Abby Kingery**

My biggest hardship in my entire journey of life is getting pregnant during my first semester of college. Becoming a mother during such a stressful, educational time proved difficult as I began to slip into a deep depression. For weeks, I believed I wouldn't finish college. Only two weeks in and I was going to drop out and live a life of financial hardships with my baby. But the overwhelming support I received from faculty and staff on campus pulled me out of this depression. I have so much more to live for and achieve my goals for me and my child. I was given my motivation back and reminded why I took the initiative to attend college. I understand my journey through college is just beginning and I know having a child in the midst of it will continue to prove challenging and financially stressful, but through the help of A-State, I am proud to be a Red Wolf and I can't wait to graduate through such a support system.

## **Joshua Smith**

OK, where to start? I am going to start right out of high school, 2020. At this time my family started coming together again, I began to trust my family again. Earlier before I graduated I decided to enlist in the military to find my calling. I spent my summer with my dad, mom, and brothers. Because in September 2020, I would be flown over to Fort Jackson for basic training, I had some hardships such as getting level 1, 2, 3, and level four stress fractures in my left leg, hating how far from home, typical stuff. After that I was home for three weeks, then I went to AIT, it was just a lot of studying. Then after that, I was home and officially in the National Guard in the month of May 2021. The family was happy I was back. That lasted for exactly one week and three days when my mother passed away. That's why I am really here. She wanted me to go to college, and not the military. So, I decided to come here to major in my favorite subject, history, while progressing my career in ROTC.

## **Lawson Collins**

My personal journey led me here through perseverance and loss. My biggest fan growing up was my grandfather. We did everything together. But when I was around 11 he passed away from cancer. Everything I have done since has been in honor of him. He never got to go to college because he went to Vietnam and because of that I always made it my personal goal to go to college to honor his memory. I am here at A-State because I had him to believe in me and the great things I could do from a young age. I wore his ring when I crossed the stage at high school graduation and I plan to wear it when I graduate from A-State with a BSE in Social Science. By being here I am able to live the life and dream that he never got to have and I plan on doing everything I can at A-State to ensure that I honor him with everything I do.

## **Eret Ledbetter**

I view myself as a well-defined person. Not in the sense that I'm boring or bland, but in the way of someone who is logical and thought-out. But looking back on it, I changed a lot over the course of my last few years of high school, to the point where it would be hard to recognize myself if I looked too far back. And of course, over that procession of time, my interests changed. As a child, I wanted to be an astronomer or an astrophysicist. Quickly figured out I couldn't do that kind of math. Later, I decided that forensic science was the way to go, crime scene analysis specifically. I was looking at our state schools and thinking about forensics programs. Then high school advanced chemistry happened, and those two years with those two classes distressed me so horribly that I was put off chemistry forever, and last minute, maybe on a whim, maybe because I remembered a dream from a long time ago, I decided that I could see myself living a very happy life as a museum archivist or curator. I had a long-lost love for museums that had been buried beneath everything else, and history had always been one of my best and favorite subjects. It helped that I had a really good history teacher in high school.

At the time I hadn't toured many campuses, but A-State was both the one I'd been to most and the one I liked best. It was welcoming to me, with a lot of greenery. My sister attended before me, so I knew it was a good college, and it was both close enough and far enough from home to appeal to me, with an interesting history department.

## **Drue Krauss**

I believe in first times. As a first-generation college student, this is a first-time thing for me and my family. One of the main things that started me on my journey to college in the first place was that I will be the first in my family to receive a bachelor's degree. Knowing that I am a first-generation college student has pushed me even harder to get into college and to succeed in college. One of the main reasons for me choosing to be a red wolf was that my mom had started college here, but did not get to finish her degree because of my PawPaw suddenly falling ill with cancer and later passing away. I know how proud he was that my mom was going back to school and I want to follow in her footsteps. With me graduating as a red wolf, I will not only be getting a degree, but I feel like I will be finishing what my mom started. I will be starting a new tradition in my family of going to college and getting a degree above an associate's. I will be the first in my family to achieve "their dream job". Not only making her proud but making my PawPaw proud too. There are many ways me being an A-State student will shape my story, this is just the one closest to my heart. This is why I believe in first times, especially the first time going to college.

### **Annalee G. Staton - It's Okay to Not be Okay**

If the college has taught me anything about life thus far, it's that it's okay to not be okay. I find myself struggling to keep up with deadlines, keeping a good balance between friends and coursework, and everything in-between. College is a new experience for any freshman, however, is a terrifying experience. I constantly find myself putting things off and making what feels like awful decisions when it comes to my classwork, but I also find myself being reminded that everything is okay. Everyone struggles and everyone has bad days. You. Are. Not. Alone. Staying up for what seems like years, crunching to get that one assignment turned in by 11:59 p.m., and simply feeling like you'll never get through it, we all feel that way. Mental health is hard sometimes. We are constantly told to love ourselves, keep a good balance, and take a break, but the truth of the matter is... it's HARD... and that's okay. Mental health is a rollercoaster everyone struggles with at some point or another. We are all told how to try and fix things, but mental health is not something that can be fixed by going to a day spa or listening to your favorite song. It is completely normal to not feel okay, we all don't, and you just have to remind yourself that although life seems unbearable at the moment, it won't be forever. It is completely normal to be happy, and not be okay, it will get better. Having friends who make it all worth it has completely changed my outlook on mental health and college. Yes, it is hard. Yes, it might get worse before it gets better, but that is okay. I want to remind anyone who reads this that it is okay to feel however you are feeling and that it will get better, and you don't have to go at it alone. Reach out to a friend, I bet that they have felt just like you at some point or another. Although life is confusing and hard to navigate sometimes, you don't have to do it alone. It is okay to not be okay, you are worth so much more than a bad day or two.

### **Andrew Dippel - From Bear to Red Wolf**

A lot has gone into my journey to Arkansas State. What does a boy from Sherwood have any business doing in Jonesboro? In 6th grade at Sylvan Hills Middle School, home of the Bears, I first developed my love for sports. That year I watched every NBA game that I could, and occasionally an NFL game with my dad. From the first moment I laid my eyes on Steph Curry's ball-handling wizardry and laser-sharp shooting, I knew that sports were for me. I had ambitions of one day playing basketball, and ultimately becoming the best player in the world. I ended up growing to be 6 feet tall the following summer, and I knew I finally had a shot; until I didn't. I wasn't that good; I was pretty average. I lacked ball handling and overall knowledge for the game. Year after year I tried to get better, but always fell short, sometimes even just barely. I decided in high school that I had a love for sports broadcasting. I knew that I had fine writing and technology skills, so I knew that I could be a broadcaster or producer. I wouldn't let my passion for sports go unused. Sophomore year, I learned about Arkansas State in Jonesboro, and how they have a great program for Sports Media. That is all it took for me. Senior year, I toured one school, applied for one school, and got accepted to one school. That is how I became a Red Wolf.

## **Logan Wilson**

I believe in being uncomfortable. When you are uncomfortable you learn things and notice things you are less likely to realize in a comfortable setting or situation. I remember my mom always telling me that God will put you in uncomfortable situations so that you grow and come out of your comfort zone. I grew up in a very small town and it was very unlikely to get uncomfortable with the people around you because everyone knew everyone. Growing up this way and going to a small high school made going to college visits very uncomfortable, especially when your friends couldn't go with you. As I searched for the right school for me, I also took into consideration the atmosphere and the feelings I felt at each school. When I toured A-State, I felt very at home and could see myself having a future here. Although this decision wasn't uncomfortable, the journey since I got here has been. I have had to come out of my comfort zone and meet new people. I think that A-State will shape me into the person I need to be academically and spiritually. I have met great people and have been invited to many events. A-State will shape my life as I am here for the next 4 years. I believe in being uncomfortable because that makes me grow and try harder to be comfortable. When you become comfortable in an atmosphere, it's easier to feel at home. Be uncomfortable for a change.

## **Celia Robertson - The Power of Can't (Right Now)**

Growing up, I would frequently vent to my father about the woes of school: bad test grades struggle with homework, et cetera. The word can't occur in these rants, and each time I would say it, my father would interrupt me with the old saying, "Can't never." What he meant to be encouraging rarely felt so at the time. Now I see that one's mindset does play the most important role in one's limitations. Even so, I firmly believe in the use of the word can't.

Toward the end of my senior year in high school, I was placed in my university's fast-track pre-medical program. I was confident I could handle the workload. That was until depression took over my life. I had a difficult time finding the motivation to do the most menial of tasks. The ominous threat of the change that college life would bring greatly worsened my depression. I felt as though I couldn't do anything. Everyone around me was discouraging me from dropping out of my program or even dropping out of my major. After a severe crying spell, however, I sent an email to my academic advisor requesting a change of major.

Switching my major to psychology was my first step in recovery. Granted, I still needed medication and counseling--both of which I did receive. Notwithstanding, my switch in major led me to a better mindset and some amazing relationships. I believe acknowledging one's limits will lead to the best outcome. I took a step back and thought to myself, I can't right now. And there is nothing wrong with this mindset, for I got to the point where I believed that I could do what I set out to do in the first place. As I write this, I have a meeting set up to sign up for classes to give my psychology major a pre-professional focus. Knowing when I needed to take a step back for my well-being has led to a more self-assured me. Realizing what you can't do within a moment--be that one hour or several years--is a gift.

## **Allie Robb**

I believe that success is not the same as perfection. For as long as I can remember, I have always believed that everything that I do has to be perfect. As a student, I had to make perfect grades. As a musician, I had to have perfect performances and look the best out on the field. And as a daughter, I had to be the perfect or “golden child.” I put all of this pressure on myself because I told myself that I had to be perfect to be successful. I have always been afraid of failure and failing as an adult was one of my biggest fears.

The expectations I put on myself at an early age did not set me up for success as I entered college. Transitioning from high school to college not only meant transitioning to another level of school but also another level of life. New independence and the expectation to survive on my own were not something I had prepared for. Moving to a new city, getting my first job to support myself, and starting my college career all at the same time felt like I was walking on a tightrope over hungry wolves, in this case, red wolves, and I had to balance it all in order to survive. I quickly realized that I could not be perfect at all three and that was one of the hardest things for me to accept.

I had to change my mindset about everything I did. I might not get a perfect score on a test, but doing my best is all that matters. Striving for perfection might have worked as a teenager in high school, but perfection as an adult is not realistic for me. I am learning and growing each day, which is the whole point of college. I am here to learn new things and possibly fail the first time as I am not expected to already know it all.

After acclimating to my new environment and routine, I now believe that finding a balance between school, work, and my personal life is possible. I do not have to be perfect to be successful; doing my absolute best, at whatever I am doing, is what will make me successful. I can now appreciate my hard work, much more than I did before, now that I am comfortable being honest with myself and what success means to me. Success is relative. And to me, success is making it through each day feeling accomplished with myself and my hard work.

## **Sarah Hooker**

Throughout my life, I have subscribed to the belief we should always put others before ourselves. Since entering college and figuring out who I am without my peers, I no longer adhere to this belief. This may seem vain or selfish but there has been a beneficial journey of self-love that has led me to this conclusion. Starting college has allowed me to get to know myself outside of other people’s opinions of me. This has allowed me to develop a thorough sense of self.

As stated before, I grew up with the notion that one must prioritize others before themselves. I took this to heart and sacrificed many things due to it. My dad has always worked out of town and left my mom home to take care of me. As I grew older, I started to feel bad that my mom was alone all the time. Due to this, I constantly canceled plans or made excuses not to go out so I could stay at home with my mom and keep her company. When I met my boyfriend, this habit only got worse. I never wanted to do things without him because I knew he would be lonely or feel left out. So, every night I’d sit with my mom and boyfriend watching television. I longed to go out with my friends or go shopping by myself but I thought that was selfish and wrong.

Now that I have entered college, I have been able to experience life without other people. As an introvert, I loved it. The entrance into university has led me to lose the belief in putting others first. Thinking back to when I canceled plans in an attempt to be selfless, I realize that this was benefiting no one.

My mom would have been fine being alone for one night every so often. My boyfriend would have been perfectly all right playing video games at home for a few hours. My commitment to not being selfish was only hurting myself. This has led me to believe that everyone needs to have some idea of what is best for them and learn how to maneuver their lives to make personal happiness attainable. It is healthy to consider your own wants and desires before others sometimes. There is a balance between doing what others want and doing what you want. Ultimately, doing things that you want to do, even if it goes against what others want or expect of you, is important and normal.

### **Lauren Treglown**

I believe in allowing others to extend help.

I have always relied on myself to fix any problems or discomforts in my life. I prefer to be independent. I do not like to burden people with any issues that may occur. I have always chosen to depend upon myself which allowed others to feel comfortable depending on me in return.

When I first made the transition to college, I held the belief that I did not have to rely on anyone but myself. As the transition grew more difficult, I realized how much an extension of help can mean. I realized that I cannot face a new environment and changes without the love and stability of people who feel at home. My belief adapted to where I could allow myself to depend on others.

The transition from high school to college removes every normal stimulus and replaces it with a new one. The familiarity and comfort built are lost and new opportunities are given. I moved to a new state, with only one friend, a new environment, and completely new people. I struggle with change and a loss of routine, the transition to college made both struggles a constant reality.

In the moments where I felt weak and unguarded, I relied upon my closest friends to ground and support me. The help that my friends extended to me drastically improved my experience. I suddenly did not feel alone. I felt like I could be myself again and that things would be okay. So even though the world around me was changing, the person inside of me stayed the same. Changing my belief and allowing others to see the vulnerable side of me vastly improved my circumstance.

I genuinely believe that if I did not make the transition to college then I would not have asked for help. Nor would I have accepted help and grown as a person. It is impossible to only have emotions about a situation, human beings need the response of one another to survive and grow. The experience taught me about the importance of relationships. Even when the world feels dark and gloomy or I am unmotivated, I know that I have people who have my back and try to provide any help that I may need.

When I first made the transition, I had a really difficult time expressing myself. Allowing people who know the real me and to offer insight into my life, allowed me to portray my inner self, outwardly. Changing my belief in self-dependency was a necessity to my college transition and made for a better response in the long run.

**T**hank you to this year's first-year students for their vulnerability and participation in the common reader event. We hope that their stories inspire you as much as they have inspired us.

**A** special thanks to each of the FYE faculty who helped to make this project possible through their continued encouragement of our first-year students. Each of your stories matters, and we are excited to be a part of your A-State journey.

- Kelli Listenbee  
First Year Experience



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