

Jean-Luc Lewis

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June Nelson Memorial Scholarship Essay

At the coordinates 56.4708° N, 132.3767° W there's a remote, native island community called Wrangell, but I call it home. Surrounded by snow covered mountains, glaciers, ocean, rivers, and untouched wilderness, the possibilities for adventure extend far beyond the mere 26 miles of paved road. Growing up in rural Alaska has provided me with unique, educational experiences that have developed my strong connection to the natural world and inspired my medical and political ambitions.

My home extends far beyond Wrangell to the vast waters surrounding it. By spending summers fishing for my family, exploring the vast wilderness with friends, living in constant view of the ocean, and being surrounded by people whose livelihood depends on its bounty, I've developed a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature and the importance of its survival.

Sadly, I've also witnessed first hand the effects of climate change on our glaciers and local salmon populations through my school's Shakes Glacier Survey Team, fueling my drive to study marine biology and research ocean conservation. Being raised in Wrangell, Alaska has created my love for the natural world and my desire to protect it.

What started as an Emergency Trauma Technician class freshman year has developed into a deep passion for medicine. When reminiscing on my past year as a first responder, one particularly memorable experience comes to mind: Through the pouring rain, the flashing blue lights illuminated the smoking mass of crumpled metal and the bloodied driver on the side of the road. The horror of the situation threatened to immobilize me, but I set aside my emotions and focused on attending to the patient.

Later, while cleaning blood off the equipment at 2 AM, I thought back on the night's events. I couldn't have prevented the accident, but I was glad I'd been able to provide effective emergency care and transportation.

I'm no longer simply fulfilling a curiosity, but actively pursuing a passion. As I gain more experience, my confidence, knowledge, and responsibilities increase. The sense

of family among the first responders, the excitement, the urgency, and the feeling of giving back fuel my love of medicine and motivate me to improve my skills. I'm dedicated to learning as much as possible in my Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) course so that I can be prepared to face even the most challenging situations.

My rural community depends on a reliable, competent emergency response team. Although it's hard to witness traumatic events, I'm grateful and honored to serve my hometown in this way. Additionally, volunteering as a first responder has galvanized my aspiration to become a physician.

My passion for politics was sparked at the state capital during the AASB Legislative Leadership Fly-in. Relief washed over me as I walked from the podium after delivering a strong testimony to the House Education Committee that described my district's financial struggles and the effect on my school. Then, I visited twenty-five legislators' offices and explained the negative impact their policies were having on my community.

Although many clearly had other priorities, I appreciated the opportunity to advocate for my town and attempt to influence their opinions. Witnessing my legislators' strong resistance to a state income tax, but willingness to further cut education, ignited my political ambitions.

Additionally, when I was selected as the only student to attend the Alaska School Safety and Well-Being Summit in Anchorage, I learned as much as I could in order to return to my district with the latest school safety strategies.

These experiences have developed my passion for politics that I hope to nurture throughout college and my life. After a career in medicine, I intend to address problems in our health care, environment, and education by becoming a politician and enacting responsive, effective legislation.

I've truly benefited from these meaningful, real-life experiences outside of school that have educated me and sparked new academic interests. No matter where I am, I'll always seek opportunities that challenge me to work harder and inspire me to learn more.