

Chariety Moler

June Nelson Memorial Scholarship

Coming from a small, rural Alaskan village, it is common to hear everyday conversations about how to improve the community. A majority of the concerns were over reviving our culture or the most recent policy changes for our community, and out of all these issues, the one that stuck out to me was the education of our youth.

It was in sixth grade when I began to notice the quality of education to be a pressing issue in Alaska. In my classroom, I'd often overhear talks from the teachers about what they could do to improve test scores or make students more enthusiastic about school with funding always being a limiting factor. Among the students, I'd hear many of them talking about how they wished the school had more subjects and activities to offer them, because they didn't feel very encouraged to pay attention in school. Also, I'd often come across headlines that would say how much of Alaska's youth thinks that obtaining a college degree, whether it be from financial struggles or believing that there is a barrier between them and their diploma, is too difficult or just not possible for them. Although it would be nice to fix all of these issues with a simple solution, this just wasn't a reality for many rural schools.

Naturally, I felt like I should try to help this myself. The first year I began volunteering in my community, I'd arrive several times a week to the local after-school program, where the children were taught many classes that weren't offered at the school before, ranging from sewing to theater to archery. The manager, teachers, and volunteers involved wanted to make the most with what the school's grant had to offer the youth. I was assigned to help coordinate the children's activities and aid in teaching the class. Oftentimes, I'd work with students who wanted

more instruction. The students seemed to thrive in a way I didn't see when I was in elementary school; there was joy for wanting to spend more time in school and to be enrolled in many diverse subjects, unlike previous years.

I've been able to help propose ideas for the program, such as how to incorporate more cultural activities into the classes and increase their attendance rate. The main goal was always to improve the learning environment for the students, and I wanted to use this initiative to improve our high school as well. As of the start of my senior year, I am the Vice President of the student council, where we, the council, plan to take initiative in adapting our student handbooks to make our learning environment more stimulating and comfortable for the students. Our hope is to not only increase enthusiasm among the students, but to also work with the teachers and school board to find a consensus. Our goal is that by the end of the current school year, we will have adjusted the school's phone policy to improve productivity and allow for easier access to resources, increase student participation in the classroom and community, and to make proper policies that address students' physical and mental health needs.

I like to think of what I have accomplished already as just a starting point for what I plan to accomplish for my community in the future. My long-term educational goal is achieving a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Mathematics, then pursuing a master's in Mathematics. After graduation, I plan to become a teacher for students in Alaska. My dual-major status will allow me to cover a large portion of the STEM field for my students, offering new classes and opportunities for them, and hopefully being able to broaden their interests. The values I've learned from my civic engagement is a type of initiative that I will use to change educational environments on a broader scale in my future career.