



W.H.E.E.L.

Scholarship Contest Winner

Jacqueline Stasa

Topic:

New Career Choice, Your Inspiration, and Why Now?

The program I have chosen to study is HVAC/R and I am currently working towards my associate degree. Once finished, I am transferring to Ferris State to earn a Bachelor of Science in HVACR Engineering Technology. I have taken a lot of time soul searching and researching career options that would give me a sense of purpose and personal satisfaction while also offering the ability to positively impact others. I enjoy working with people and have always excelled in environments that encourage me to strengthen customer relationships.

I have chosen this program to study because #1 – This line of work will allow me to give back to people in need, and #2 – This is a field in dire need of professionals, and I believe I would do an excellent job and thoroughly enjoy my work. I know how hard life can be financially, let alone having extra funds for a failed heating or cooling system. I live in a community with many retirees and I know how important it is for them to have consistent, reliable heating and cooling all year round. I have also worked in the finance industry and worked with individuals one on one with extreme financial hardships, so I realize many are on fixed incomes. I am very excited to be skilled in this trade knowing I will be able to offer support to my family as well as other families in my community.

I was raised by an energetic, passionate, resilient young woman, my mother, who is still sacrificial for the well-being of my younger sister and myself. Even though it was just our mother who raised us, my grandparents were also very involved. I am blessed and so grateful to say that I had a fantastic childhood, full of love, support, tractor rides with grandpa and homemade suppers from grandma. I never felt like we were lacking or struggling. With all the wisdom surrounding my life, I did learn very early on how important it is to be self-reliant, responsible, and to be a hard worker. However, I also remember very challenging times when we had limited means of help, whether it was financially, minimal mechanical skills, or even the basic help from a father.

There are plenty of reasons I could share as to what drew me to this industry, but one stands out due to the nature of the program. My mother had an extreme financial hardship one winter when I was a child, and she could not pay our heat bill. With no money and minimal options, we had given extra food to a family member so they would in turn give her money so we could pay the heat bill. Shortly after however, the furnace just stopped working entirely and needed to be replaced. We had to go without heat for some time, but I do not recall how long we went without it. Looking back now, I can only imagine how terrified my mother was and how other families feel because I know that this is still a real issue for families. Being the oldest child, it was not too long after that I began taking on additional roles of the absent, that 2nd parent for my sister, and extra support for my mother.

For the first time in my life, I feel excited about my future and for what is in store for me, regardless of recent economic events or the fear of a reoccurring past. My recent school experience has also given me the chance to prove to myself that no matter what, I can succeed and still do great things even through trying global uncertainties. I am a first-generation college student so I am proud that I have not given up and I can lead by example for my younger sister and help her once she is ready. Even though this journey has been one of my most difficult ones, my mother and my sister are my inspirations; they are the reason I keep going, they are my “why”. I am going to build an amazing, successful life and I am bringing them the entire way!