



W.H.E.E.L.

Scholarship Contest Winner

Kathleen Kelly

Topic:

New Career Choice

Why Now?

Your Inspiration

"I'm sorry. I can't tell you much more other than she is not stable, but we have her intubated. I don't normally like giving arbitrary percentages, but I want you both to be prepared. Our team is giving your daughter a 30% chance or less of survival at this point. We will get you up to see her as soon as you are taken care of. Do you have any questions?" -Neonatologist, Sparrow, Hospital. October 22nd, 2015.

When I was in high school, I don't believe I gave my advisor much direction. Although I was a 4.0 student, captain of the cheerleading team, president of the National Honor Society, President of the Student Council, and performed in all of our plays and musicals, I didn't have a solid plan post high school. I knew then that foreign languages came easy to me so that is what I decided to pursue. I thoroughly enjoyed my undergraduate degree (Spanish and Interpersonal Communication) at Western Michigan University and graduated with honors. However, I still didn't know what I "wanted to be when I grew up." I figured that I had time and wanted to explore life and learn everything I could before making such a finite decision. The not so funny thing about life though, is that time still passes as you are trying to find that direction.

It wasn't until that rainy day in October that my compass found its true north. This was the day my life changed forever. I find it safe to say that many, if not all, parents can make that statement about the arrival of their first child. What many might not say is, that day was the worst day of my life. She arrived during a long, arduous, and ultimately failed home birth that left her without oxygen for countless minutes, with a fleeting pulse, purple skin, and a grim diagnosis. During her long stay at Sparrow Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, I knew with an unwavering sense of clarity that every decision in my life up until this point had prepared me to be a bedside nurse.

Sitting next to my daughter's isolette I applied to Lansing Community College and began taking my nursing pre-requisites that spring semester. At that exact moment, there were hundreds of "unknowns" in my life. I didn't even know what the quality of life would be for my daughter. She was hooked up to monitors, had a feeding tube, and had just been extubated. Life was undetermined and terrifying but feeling so certain in my decision to return to school for a second degree gave me a bit of solace. I didn't just want to become a nurse, I feel it is what I have been preparing for my entire life. Every professional position I've held has had one thing in common- altruism. I find such contentment and joy in helping other people and using my skill sets to make their struggles easier. Even my first bachelor's degree in Interpersonal Communication gave me the pillar to launch from to connect with others and communicate in a positive/therapeutic and effective manner.

I have been accepted into the nursing program at L.C.C. and will begin my studies this January, 2020. I know that it will be a long and at times difficult journey, but my excitement of reaching the end goal is outweighing my nervousness. I will have rough days as a nurse and I'm sure, question my sanity at times, but I can promise that I will never question my decision to become a nurse. Because of my experience and unfortunate lack of quality care during my labor and deliver, I understand the extreme importance in education surrounding prenatal, postnatal, and labor/delivery. It was my family's decision to deliver at home with not enough understanding of the possible medical risks and I will forever have to live with that decision. However, I will not wallow. I will leave my mark on the medical field as a bedside nurse in a way that, hopefully, touches at least one family. It is my mission to medically care for others in the way that I should have been cared for during my daughter's birth. That traumatic day was the turning point in my indecisiveness but her continued fight and persistence is my daily drive to make her proud and help others like her.