The Nameless Nurse

I sat on the crinkly white doctors office paper as salty tears ran down my face, mixing with the unceasing flow of blood coming from my nose. A warm, gentle hand fell on my shoulder and a soothing voice told me to lay back as the gauze was taken from my nose so the wound could be evaluated. I latched onto the small bit of comfort I received from the nurse's gentle touch and nurturing care. My flow of tears slowed and my breathing steadied. She never left my side that day, and that alone changed my life. At seven years old, I was swimming in a sea of hurt and she was a safe beacon guiding me back to shore. I will never know her name or get to thank her for the immense impact she made on me, but one thing is for sure. That moment changed my life. That one day that I split my nose open and had to get stitches made me cross paths with someone whose simple presence would change the entire trajectory of my life.

As a consequence of what may seem to be a small, insignificant moment, I want to devote my life to serving others through a career in healthcare. Improving the healthcare industry would greatly contribute to enhanced, more livable, and vibrant communities. Our idea of healthcare in today's society is skewed because of words like cancer, surgery, and terminal. What about words like restoration, cured, and pregnancy? We as a society have become so blinded by the diagnosis that we fail to see beyond that piece of paper to the people who are pouring themselves out in hope that everyone can be cared for, comforted, and nurtured.

The Dalai Lama said something I greatly identify with. He said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." That is nursing in a single sentence. It is the everyday jobs, opening a window shade so a patient can sit in the sunshine, helping a postpartum mother nurse her baby for the first time, or help a rehabilitating patient take their first

steps again, that make a difference. The small things done with a radical compassion are the things that truly make our societies more vibrant.

I may not make a ground breaking discovery that has the potential to cure cancer, but I can improve my own community and make an impact by playing my small part. By carrying out my compassion through a career in nursing. If I can inspire just one little girl like myself to become a nurse that comes alongside people in their suffering and embodies that lighthouse, I will have completed my goal. That little seven year old girl that wanted to be a police officer is now a senior in high school amazed at the profound influence that one trip to the doctor's office had. I no longer want to be a police officer solely because someone decided to play their small part by doing small things with great love.

Our country is in desperate need of devoted people who transform going in for an appointment into a personal experience where everyone is able to leave feeling seen and valued. America would be a better place if little boys and girls didn't feel afraid or threatened by their pediatric nurse. Cancer patients would leave feeling uplifted if their oncology nurse remembered to ask them about their grandkids or their plans to build a greenhouse. Good nurses can't necessarily take away the diagnosis. They can, however, be a radiant beam of light in an occupation consumed by darkness.