

Letter of Intent

I once read a quote from Nelson Mandela that resonated within me. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." This statement is one of the main reasons that I returned to college in the first place three years ago. I knew that I wanted the world to be a better place for my own children. I needed to know that I could make a difference in the lives of families who were struggling. I needed to know that I could inspire. However, more than anything, I needed to know that I could help save the children, because it will be them that make this world a place worth living in.

I started working at a young age and did make my attempt to go to college after high school. I married young and was surprised when I found out that I was pregnant with twins. School became nonexistent for me. My whole life became consumed with the lives of my boys. I knew early that my boys were going to have "problems." And when they were born, at 27 weeks, we were handed a book about "What to Expect in the NICU" and we were literally text book cases. Both of the boys had pulmonary hemorrhages, which led to brain bleeds, which led to hydrocephalus, which led to seizures, which led to severe brain damage and cerebral palsy. To top it off, one of my twins had a rare syndrome and a congenital heart defect that required open heart surgery.

Fifteen years later, here I sit, my children having over 18 surgeries between them both, 5 brain surgeries, two open heart surgeries. I cannot help but remember when they told me that my boys would be vegetables and I should turn them off of life support. Yet here I sit, remembering the moment that I would fight for them no matter what. Fifteen years later, they are happy and loving and enjoy life. Non-verbal and wheelchair bound, but full of laughter and love. It has not been easy, but it has been worth every moment.

However, I did not count on doing it alone the majority of the time. Their dad could not handle their special needs. He became scarce leaving me to handle it on my own. Eventually I realized it would be better for me and the boys to be on our own so he and I could learn to better communicate separately. It was three years ago that I realized it was time to better myself and make a difference and return to school. I had seen the struggles throughout the years. The struggles of other families.

The struggles of children just trying to survive. Of parents trying to make ends meet. I have seen abuse and families fall apart. I have seen people who need help just learning how to communicate. People needing help to just get by.

I returned to our local community college through single parenthood and helping to care for my ailing mother and working at our local hospital. I decided in 2012, after my graduation, with my Associate's Degree to pursue my Bachelor's at the University of North Alabama. I knew I wanted to study Sociology so I could have a broad outlook of social sciences and could eventually specialize in something for my Master's Degree. And now, here I am, days from graduation, trying to plan the rest of my life.

I know I am ready for the work that graduate school will offer. I have been carrying a full load for nearly three years, while still homeschooling my children. I have excelled in the classes in regards to family as a family studies minor. I will continue my certification for Family Life Education immediately after graduation as it has been my concentration.

I have interned at the Family Success Center here in Gadsden, Alabama as well as volunteering with the Center and the United Way. I am also in contact with the National CASA organization about beginning the training process for being a volunteer Court Appointed Advocate for children. I am determined to make a better life for these families, specifically the children so that they may continue on their path to making this world a better place. All children deserve a bright future.

What I have learned during my time at UNA is that I still want to change the world. I have realized that I still want to help others, starting with the core of our society, family. I am passionate about being the voice of children who cannot be heard. Whether they are ignored or special needs and cannot speak for themselves. And I have learned that my journey through education to make this happen is not complete. I am also aware that it may seem that I take on too much, but this is one of my strengths. I need to follow this path of Family Studies and Social Work.

Having been on both sides of the fence of needing help and providing it, I know I will be an asset to the Graduate Program at the University of North Alabama. This is my calling. This is where I am supposed to be. I believe that I have been through the struggles so that I may have compassion for others in need.

Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I long to be a part of that group and know I will excel at it. Given the chance, I will show that I am more than ready to take on the challenge. If I can help one family, one child, then I've done my part to make for a brighter future. Thank you for any consideration.