

Maria Baltazar

"Mija, you're in a country where your dreams are within your reach. Just put your head in the books and anything is possible here in America!" This is what my father has always told me.

Both my parents are from a third world country where they were forced to leave their home at such a young age because Guatemala was at war. By leaving Guatemala, my parents allowed us to walk into the doors of opportunity. My loving parents have made me a strong, striving, young lady who shall make something of herself to impacting the lives of others in a positive way as they have done for me. I am the third child out of five and have one older sister and one older brother in college as well as one younger sister and one younger brother in high school. Being the middle child, I have been fortunate to have older role models as well as me being a role model to my two younger siblings.

Despite my learning disability in reading and writing, I have rightfully earned my place in the top 7% of my graduating class with a GPA of 4.39. I have also achieved an 11 on my ACT Writing on a 2-12 scale. I have even been able to participate in clubs at school such as: Better Education Through Achievements (BETA), College Reach Out Program (CROP), Scholars Club, Student Government, Executive Board and Women's Active Voice of Encouragement (W.A.V.E.). Being a member of BETA, I have participated in celebrating the birthdays of the elderly at The Robert's Center and Cypress Run, both retirement homes where I have had the pleasure of their company and to see the happiness in the eyes of individuals who have experienced so much. With the various clubs I am involved in and being part of Immokalee I have participated in many enriching activities.

I was allowed to participate in a project that has been adopted by my school for three years now, "Relay for Life." Not only did it allow us to raise money for the American Cancer Society, it also allowed the community and our school to unite for one great cause. I personally enjoyed being a part of this great activity occurring once a year at my school, which permits me to get involved as well as recognize and honor the individuals who are fighting, have fought, or have passed on as a result of cancer. Being part of this movement for 3 years, I have felt honored to raise money by organizing a car wash, collecting donations for luminaries and asking my fellow students, teachers and members in my community to donate money for the American Cancer Society. I truly feel this cause has had a great impact on our school, community and the victims of cancer in a positive way.

I plan to attend the University of Florida where I would be able to pursue my studies in the field of medicine. Once I complete my studies, I shall help provide all I can to the individuals in need of care who are unable to financially afford it. I am so passionate about helping others because I see how hard and expensive it is for my parents to take all five children to the doctor without financial support. I can remember all the times my parents told us "ha vi la paah," to take care! Medical care costs were prohibitive since my father is the only one working to put food on the table as well as clothes on our backs, while, my mother is a stay at home mom growing crops in our garden to try to reduce the amount of food needed to buy at the grocery store. Thankfully, God allowed me to get help from caring individuals in this world. I would love to show my gratitude by helping the ones that are facing the same situations my family has or are in even more of



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a need. I will provide to the individuals in my community as well in other communities of the services I have to offer to them once I complete my studies.

But, without scholarships and financial aid; it would be a very difficult task for me to accomplish my dreams. With every support I shall receive, I will even more enthusiastically giving it my all! Through the numerous obstacles that are set in my path, I plan to use the support and belief that others give me to succeed.

It is within my power to finish the story that my parents have started for me by coming to America!

Thank you for your time and consideration!

