Tab 1

From the age of seven, I learned I wanted to study and explore the world around me. One of my first memories of traveling the world with my father and grandfather was a trip to a village in Swaziland (now Eswatini) where I met a school group of 8th grade students who lived within the village. As a white child who grew up in a predominantly Caucasian community, it was quite a shock to be the minority race among all of the kids around me. However, when I was able to interact with each of the kids, it was like there were no differences at all - just the purity of child innocence and wonder. Similarly, many of the kids were very enthusiastic to talk with my grandfather as they had never met a man in his mid 60’s before! I was curious how that could be so I researched and learned soon after, the average life expectancy in Swaziland was only 46 years old back in 2014 and it truly broke my heart. However, I learned that despite all of the daily hardships that these families were facing, their love for each other was just as evident no matter where they were living.

Almost a decade later, when I was 16, I visited Vietnam and Cambodia with my father and grandfather for three and a half weeks. At one point, my father and I volunteered to help a man in a Cambodian hospital - which was nothing more than an open-air concrete building with no beds, makeshift supplies, and a volunteer doctor who got paid based on what the families could provide. His injured daughter was being treated for a moped accident that had occurred a month before and the family visibly appreciated our emotional support. Learning to help a family that I had just met two days before with such a horrible event helped me realize what I can do to help young families who are struggling with basic needs and health.

Lastly, this past summer when I turned 17, I visited one of the most polluted cities in the world: Cairo, Egypt. After exploring the city for three days it was apparent why the living conditions in many parts were so poor. The air quality was the equivalent to smoking two packs of cigarettes per day! Comparatively, despite the absence of clouds, one evening we were able to look directly at the sun during sunset because the amount of pollution particles was so great that the sun was nothing more than a faded orange glow. Along the horse feces filled streets in Giza I saw numerous young kids begging for anything that would help them survive. Discarded plastic waste was everywhere, with water bottles being the worst as it's the main fresh drinking source for many of these citizens. Experiencing first-hand the environmental problems that we as a society need to solve, helped me realize how I want to help the people in these countries. By coming up with solutions to help bring accessible safe water, curb pollution, and create viable areas for waste storage, I can help improve the quality of life for the citizens in cities like Cairo.

I have truly been fortunate to see so much of the world, especially the less economically developed parts of the world, at such a young age. While I have seen sickness and sadness, I have also observed the love that everyone has for each other and the desire the people have for a better and longer-living life. By using the future opportunities I have and the experiences that I have gathered, I believe that I can truly make a difference by working with others as a team to benefit the world through environmentally sustainable health so that the people of Swaziland, Cambodia, Egypt and elsewhere can experience the same level of safety and opportunities as I have.

Tab 2