

Becoming more and more of an adventurer is my primary goal for the rest of my life. However, being adventurous does not necessarily mean diving with sharks or hang gliding across the everglades. It also means learning more about ourselves and our friends and family. Discovering more about the ones we care for often brings common ground and growth in friendships that later lead to just happier lives. I am learning this as I slowly crawl to my goal of becoming an adventure tour guide.

After temporarily dropping out of college, I participated in Marine Zoological Career Camp at Seaworld in San Antonio, TX. Here I learned about what kinds of responsibilities go into taking care of such beautiful animals of the ocean. This included feeding king penguins, learning enrichment techniques of dolphins and whales, and the importance of the ocean's habitat. This experience would be a milestone achievement that would lead me to my first full-time job at an animal hospital.

I knew I had to keep my mind busy with more than just my job at the animal hospital. Stimuli was often met by taking solo trips to South Padre Island, where I would have a small skateboard sesh, do some wade fishing, and visit small businesses. The waves and the sand are my bread and butter. Coming back home with salty hair had always made me feel like I certainly did *carpe diem*.

However, I craved more of a rush. I soon discovered the grueling obstacle courses known as Spartan Race. The videos of people struggling through it looked painful, scary, and... exciting. In 2014, I completed my Spartan Race Trifecta which earned me plenty of cuts, bruises, and tears that needed to occur. I had found that pushing myself brought me such joy. Everyone at the finish line of each 3 races looked like they had been in a Fight Club, but they all had such amazing smiles. This led me to believe that if something scares me but excites me, I should do it. This inspired me to compete in a triathlon at South Padre Island where I was placed 2nd in my age group! Challenging myself both physically and mentally would be what made me, me.

Being out of school was open time and time is an investment. So I got to work and began achieving whatever I could to stimulate my mind while growing as a person. In 2016, I found the desire to become Wilderness First Aid certified. Sure, I could've taken the class in Austin, TX, which is a 5 hour drive away, but that just didn't seem adventurous to me. Colorado Springs, CO offered the class as well and I knew I had to jump on that opportunity. The 16 total-hour drive was not grueling at all. I couchsurfed with a gentleman in Lubbock, TX where we both conversed on our love for tiny houses and off-grid living. The Wilderness First Aid course was an amazing learning experience that I'm glad I took part in...

...but I wasn't done yet.

My job at the animal hospital was full-time, and when I wasn't at my yoga internship, I was usually running errands. However, I knew I could take another step towards my "adventure tour guide" goal. I decided to get a job with my city's Parks and Recreation department. This

second job was a breath of fresh air, literally! I was outside in the great outdoors working at a kayak and SUP rental facility as an instructor. During my employment, I soon moved up to instructing a SUP workout class. Still, I wasn't satisfied, and I asked my supervisor to have me also work at our local Nature Center. 20 acres of native species of trees, animals, and plants. It is truly one of my most favorite places to be. Here, I would lead a kid's program where I lead kids in simple arts and crafts assignments that utilize recycled materials and educational lessons.

So here I was, gaining experience with waterfront, wilderness first aid certified, and being a fun arts and crafts instructor with kids. But you guessed it, I wanted more....

Being a dog lover, I started my own side gig of pet-sitting and dog-walking in my local area. My animal hospital experience certainly made me a star choice in people's eyes. My favorite dog is Dallas. He's an 80-pound Akita who loves chasing rabbits. I also love the 2 old-lady German shepherds Bella and Tula. Their stiff hips and poor eyesight never stopped them from getting up to greet me before our feedings. Dogs are such a blessing to us.

My work experience has become my greatest adventure. I say "has" because I'm still reaching for more and more exciting opportunities. I scored a job this summer as a fishing instructor and camp counselor at Camp Canadensis in Pennsylvania. I exceeded the expectations of the fishing program. The previous years at Camp Canadensis, nobody was catching fish and the elective barely had any campers signed up. However, this year, the elective was "revolutionized" (as I was personally told by the camp director) and my lifetime experience of fishing brought a new popularity into the elective. This fall, my marine biology education will continue at a new campus that conducts amazing field projects at South Padre Island. So many adventures are heading my way this year that I'm scared but excited as well!

Even though it seems like I'm a freight train going 100 mph all the time, I can assure I know how to simmer down and appreciate the slower moments. I have to recognize just how much I appreciate my mother for being so supportive and my friends for being there for me when I need them. It took me some time, but I then realized that I needed to put time into the ones I love as well. I'm always promoting my friends' ideas and showing up to their events. They need to know that I love their ambition and hard work. Sometimes, I'll just post on our group chats "Hey! I'm free! Anybody need help with anything?" and I love when they ask for help.

I do consider myself to be a happy person as well. One quality that I know Ryan Hawks and I possess is our easy-going attitude and ability to not let negativity affect our outlook. One thing I love to share with others is that **we will have reasons to be angry, but we will never have reasons to be mean.** To me, this means that holding grudges and revenge in oneself leads to nothing but your own fallback. It means that being civil and clear of negativity can help build relationships effectively.

I should finally admit something. I'm currently looking for scholarships to help me gain more certifications and to help with my educational expenses. I knew simply searching for scholarships I qualify for simply on GPA and field of interest was a little too easy and I wasn't likely to stand out. Looking for a scholarship that really spoke to me on a deeper level became more of a priority. Finding the Flyin Ryan Adventure Program Scholarship has been such a keynote staple. Learning from Ryan's friends about who he was makes me happy that someone had been such a blessing to so many individuals. It made me feel so compelled to apply and work on this essay. I want to become someone that is as influential and passionate about life as Ryan Hawks. If I were to be awarded a scholarship from the foundation, I would become scuba certified, snorkel certified, and take surfing lessons. These would be incredibly rad certifications to acquire after having my Marine Biology degree and Leadership Studies Minor. I could only hope that once achieving all that, I can become an adventure tour guide that help individuals learn about the ocean and inspire an adventurous spirit in more people.