

Terry Bryant 2021 Scholarship

My desire to become a lawyer is personal; I want to protect children as a child advocacy attorney. My sister (who has mental health and learning disabilities) and her second husband were abusing my nephews. Several times, I made reports to the Department of Human Services with the information I gathered from my nephews and with the evidence of actions I had witnessed. This experience had a profound effect on me because I did everything possible to legally protect my nephews, yet they still ended up with irreversible psychological and physical problems. This situation inspired me to learn about child abuse and ways our communities can prevent such tragedies.

The most powerful way to protect children is through the enforcement of protection laws. When my nephews were removed from my sister's home and brought to their biological father's home, I urged him to file a restraining order. Additionally, I wrote several letters to a district judge describing the abuse my nephews experienced and why I thought my sister was unfit to be their legal guardian. I built a case for the children.

During the summer of 2019, I interned at a law firm in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where I organized clients' files and discovery for court. I attended trials and listened to divorce, adoption, and custody cases. This experience confirmed my interest in representing the welfare of children. My current position as a clerk judicial assistant with the Colorado Judicial Branch, which allows me to read hundreds of criminal cases every week, has only furthered my interest in child advocacy. With a law degree, I will have an essential tool that will allow me to help those who suffer from abuse. I am aware of the resources that can help abused and neglected children and I know that I can diligently study cases and judicially act with willpower to fight for them.

I was raised in a small town in Northwestern Colorado with an economy fueled by a coal mine and the boom-and-bust of oil and gas. My family includes healthcare providers, farmers, ranchers, oilmen, and military service members. Rangely, my hometown, has no fast-food restaurants and the closest shopping center is a two-hour drive over one of Colorado's most challenging mountain passes. As a result of Rangely's social and geographical isolation, I never met a lawyer until I was eighteen-years-old. Despite remote living, I was eager to grow professionally as a young adult.

I took advantage of living in a small town by joining nearly every youth organization that my small town offered. From swimming competitively every summer to raising goats and pigs in 4-H, I was constantly surrounded by others and learned about the world. Specifically, I enjoyed student council in high school. I served as class president from my freshman to junior year and student body president during my senior year of high school. I spent thousands of hours planning events for my school peers. I served as a point of contact for community members, to keep members of the community at the forefront of our school functions. Through my suggestion and leadership, my class agreed to donate proceeds from the junior class prom, to benefit a boy in the area undergoing chemotherapy.

I enjoy creative solutions. While I was student body president, I started a bi-weekly school calendar called "The Stall Street Journal" that was placed in all the school bathroom stalls. I wanted to make student council easier to navigate for my successors, so I created a 'survival guide' binder for the future student body presidents that contained my suggestions and all the documents I created during my four years in student council. When I served in student government in college, I carried on my tradition of creating a 'survival guide' for my successors after I planned Colorado Mesa University's annual health and safety day.

My college and work experiences have confirmed my interest in public service and volunteerism. In addition to child advocacy, I want to provide pro-bono legal services to people who cannot afford a lawyer in rural areas. Also, I want to create a local scholarship fund to help youth who go out of their way to serve their community. While in high school, I attended Colorado's Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Program as a delegate and a staff member. This program inspired me. Within two years, I served five hundred community service hours by tutoring youth and volunteering at the local community garden.

Receiving the Terry Bryant 2021 Scholarship would be a tremendous help for my legal education. Before finishing my bachelor's degree at the University of Texas, I knew I needed to take two years off from school to work to afford living and school expenses during my graduate work. Due to COVID-19, I did not make nearly as much money as I had planned because of reduced hours at the Colorado State Capitol. Since I will be supporting myself through law school and not receiving financial help from my family, scholarship assistance is essential for my enrollment and focus as a student.

As I help my ten-year-old nephew with his schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic, I observe his cognitive and speech delays. I worry that these delays, which are consequences of living in an abusive and neglectful household, will follow him for the rest of his life. Creating a world that provides better protection and legal advocacy for all children begins with people who understand the harm that comes from turning a blind eye.