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**1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner, High School Division and Overall Contest Winner**

**Reaching your Dreams by Choosing Optimism**

This year's theme of "Reaching Your Dreams by Choosing Optimism" means to me that you need to look ahead at where you want to go and persevere through the hardships to reach your goals. The word "Choosing" stands out because, as humans, we have the choice to find joy in hardships instead of letting them tear us down. Hardships are temporary, so we can have the hope of a brighter tomorrow.

"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence" ("Helen"). This quote is inspirational to me because I hope to achieve a job that requires hard work and dedication. I'm hoping to be a doctor in the field of radiology. Medical school is difficult to get into, and the courses required are challenging. Many students will not make it into the school, or make it through the curriculum, but I am optimistic that I can make it and become a radiologist. The path forward will not be easy, but I know that if I work hard and remain positive, I can achieve my goal.

My English class read a book about Helen Keller, a girl born blind and deaf. Despite the difficulty she had in communicating, the resilience, perseverance, and optimism of her teacher, Annie Sullivan, allowed Keller to be able to communicate and become an inspiration to many people. Helen Keller, with the help of Annie Sullivan, went from being unable to communicate to someone who inspires generations with her words of insight and meaning, like this quote. If Keller can overcome these obstacles, then surely, I can overcome the obstacles ahead of me to achieve my goals.

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment starting to improve the world” (Goodrich). This quote from Anne Frank’s diary is one that I see in direct correlation with what I aspire to achieve in the field of medicine. I am hoping to change the world by improving lives through medicine. In radiology I will be looking for diseases like cancer, infections, and other deadly ailments. By being able to detect these things early, I will be able to save lives. My contribution to improving the world is by giving others the chance to improve the world by extending their lives.

Anne Frank was a Jewish girl who lived during World War II. During most of the war, she, her family, and others were in hiding. Despite the threat to her and others’ lives, Anne Frank remained optimistic and continues to inspire people with the words she wrote in her diary. Like the quote above, despite everything that happened, she continued to believe that people are good at heart. As a doctor, I am sure I will see many terrible things, like gunshot wounds and battered children, but if Anne Frank could see the good in people in a war with extermination, then I can hold onto that optimistic hope that people are good at heart.

“The essence of optimism is that it takes no account of the present, but is a source of inspiration, of vitality and hope where others have resigned; it enables a man to hold his head high, to claim the future for himself and not to abandon it to his enemy.” (“Dietrich”)

The path I plan to take for my future career will be long and strenuous, but when it is all over, I will have a good, well-paying job. If I look ahead to what I will be able to achieve when I have a job, then I can remain optimistic while I work toward my goal. It will take much perseverance and dedication. Perhaps, when I achieve my goal, I will be able to inspire other young women to seek and achieve jobs in STEM fields.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned during World War II for treason to the Nazi Party. The conditions in which he was imprisoned were deplorable, and yet, in all the writings he did in prison, he never lost his faith and optimism. From this quote, it is clear that Bonhoeffer looked ahead, toward the future, and not at the circumstances he was facing at the time. When I am studying for a difficult exam, or feel stressed by an upcoming project, I can look ahead, toward my goals, and push through, knowing that it will be worth it when I finish.

Being optimistic in a world full of tragedy is hard, especially since many have the habit of focusing on those tragedies. But nothing lasts forever, especially hardship, so if we look ahead, toward a brighter future, then we can have the courage to face whatever stands in our way. These quotes help me find encouragement in my goal to becoming a doctor.

#### Works Cited

“Dietrich Bonhoeffer Quotes.” *BrainyQuote*, Xplore, [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/dietrich\\_bonhoeffer\\_134459](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/dietrich_bonhoeffer_134459).

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Goodrich, Frank, et al. *Diary of Anne Frank*. Random House, 1956.