

To Whom It May Concern,

Seven year-old Katie sits on the shiny brown leather examining table, her legs jiggling as I get ready to check her ears with an otoscope. The bubbly second-grader has a history of chronic episodic otitis media and had received bilateral tympanostomy tubes a number of years prior, but today she is the very picture of health. That didn't mean that she isn't nervous, though. 'The right one's hanging out,' she pipes up as I steadied her head. I paused, then slowly straightened back up, gathering my face into a concerned frown. 'Before I begin, may I ask you an important question?' Katie scoots to the edge of the table, her knuckles turning white as she braces herself. 'Katie,' I continue sternly, 'can you tell me *who*, exactly, your right ear tube has been hanging out with?' My laughing eyes give me away, and Katie breaks into a giggle. I walk out of the examination room with a smile on my face.

It's moments like these that give me pause to appreciate the extraordinary honor that is offered as patients and their families welcome me, a wide-eyed novice, into their worlds. The second year of medical school at Hopkins has opened up new and exciting vistas for me. Presentations on the rigors of boards and wards threw my innards into knots, to be sure, but the apprehension soon turned to wonder as I delved eagerly into my autopsy rotation, taking in the intricacies of humans' physical architecture as the pieces that I had learned in the classroom over the past year finally came together into an elegant clinical/gross/histological unity. Volunteering with the Baltimore Merit Program, I have been privileged to mentor a promising young high school student as he pursues his dream of going to college and becoming a physician. As I resuscitated Sim-Man in our Transition to Wards course, my heart quickened with the realization that, someday, this training would help to save somebody's life. Even in the midst (throes?) of studying for Step 1 of my USMLE, I cannot shake the eager anticipation that comes with the knowledge that I am slowly but surely becoming the doctor that I've always wanted to be.

All of this brings me to the heart of this letter – that none of this would be possible without your extraordinary generosity. Thank you for believing in my future enough to come alongside me and support me as I walk through these doors. Anne Frank once wrote, "Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!" Because of you, my good news will one day indeed become good news for those who need it most. For this – thank you.