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2020 RED WOLF READS

FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE
Kelli Listenbee



PERSONAL NARRATIVES

Contained are a selection of short narratives written by first year students based off this year's common reader, "This I Believe II: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women" edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman. The purpose of the First-Year Common Reader is to promote a shared intellectual experience to engage students socially and academically both inside and outside of the classroom.

Table of Contents

Stories	Page Number
Anna Kearbey	3
Aidan Hughes	3
Ruth Quintero	4
Tyler Guthrie	4
Hayden Chipman	5
Ayami Takada	5
Kenedie Henley	6
Mary Fincher	6
Logan Gray	7
Trevor Hawley	7
Brennen Grimes	8
Daley Belew	8
Harley Kilgore	9
Ellie Albrecht	9
Nya McLaurin	10
Jatoria Mitchell	10
Georgia White	11
Kirsten Jones	11
Anonymous (1-7)	12-14
Austin Sloan	15
Anna Lee Murry	16
Allysa Rogers	16
Haley Hightower	17
Madelynne Sutherland	17
Ashlynn Rippy	18
Garrett Doherty	18
Thank You	19

Finding the Good - Anna Kearbey

I believe that there is good to come from every situation. My whole life, I have been coming to Jonesboro to shop, hang out with my grandparents, and go to ASU football games. My grandparents lived in Jonesboro, and both of my parents graduated from A-State. Because of this I've always known that this was where I wanted to go to school. As I got older and college got closer, my grandparents and I began to get really excited about me going to school here. I was excited for all the shopping trips and lunches that I would get to take with my grandma, because we were always super close. But before my sophomore year of high school, my grandma got sick and passed away. I didn't understand why I wasn't going to get to spend my time in Jonesboro with her. I had always dreamed of her seeing me graduate high school and college. This situation was tough, but I knew that I still wanted to become a Red Wolf. Because of it, I am closer to my grandpa today than I was back then. I go to lunch with him at least once a week, and he always makes sure I have plenty of gas in my car. Being in Jonesboro is continuing to build my relationship with him. Even though the situation was hard, I was able to find the good in it, and that's part of the reason why I am who I am today.

Personal Narrative – Aidan Hughes

Throughout my life I have been very blessed. I have a stable connection with my family and a healthy lifestyle with a close knit group of friends who have been with me for a long time. As for my previous education, I attended Central Arkansas Christian School in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Since I only attended one school it gave me the opportunity to make close friends that I would have with me for many years. When it came time to decide on which college I would be attending, I started to talk to two of my closest friends and see what their plans were. They both mentioned Arkansas State to me and convinced me to go and tour the campus. Once I took a campus tour, I instantly loved the campus and found out that they had a good exercise science program which is what my major was and still is. From this, I decided to apply to Arkansas State and attend that upcoming Fall. By attending Arkansas State, it will give the ability to have, in the sense, a fresh start and find new friends that could potentially last a lifetime and be there for me whenever they are needed. In conclusion, this campus serves as a fresh start to add on to the amazing group of people I have in my life already.

This I Believe – Ruth Quintero

Throughout my life, I have been taught the importance of a good work ethic. Both of my parents are incredibly hard workers who have shown me the importance of diligence and integrity. Throughout my school years, I remember them encouraging me to do my best, and even if it was not the best by the world's standards, as long as I tried my hardest and gave it my best effort, that was all that mattered. As high school drew to a close, I decided that I wanted to pursue a career in Physical Therapy. The first reaction that most people had was that the career I had chosen was an incredibly difficult one. However, I know that ultimately through hard work and the passion I have, I will be able to achieve whatever I set my mind to. In high school, I kept my grades up and worked to get a good ACT score, which allowed me to apply to A-State and get accepted. As I have been here, I have been continuously reminded of the importance of a good work ethic. Without hard work, it is incredibly hard to get anywhere in life, and this has led me to believe in the importance of a good work ethic.

The Pack – Tyler Guthrie

Me. My life. My wonderful life. It has been amazing actually. It has been a great journey, teaching me so many great things. As I grew up, my dad always taught me to always be me and never try to fit in because if I do, I will never succeed. However, if I just be me and stay dedicated, I can do anything I set my mind to. I grew up going to three different schools, living in 4 different houses because of my parent's divorce. However, it was never a bad thing because either way I loved both of them and got so many more experiences due to it.

This journey led me to becoming a Red Wolf because it's so close to home and of course that's where my dad went to college. Being part of the pack is like being part of another family. I always have someone, time and time again, to do activities with and just overall have fun. Being a student at A-State will help continue my story because I am going to be very involved and it will open up endless opportunities in life for me. I going to be pack alumni coaching baseball somewhere all because of my journey at A-State. All in all, masks up and wolves up.

My Personal Journey – Hayden Chipman

My journey to where I am now has been a long, but memorable journey. My personal journey has not been just me and I am not the only one that has got me to where I am today. My younger sister is a big portion in my personal journey on how I got to where I am today. Continuing with my personal story, I have always wanted to help people ever since one of my sisters was diagnosed with a disability known as Cerebral Palsy. I have watched my sister struggle with things that people would never think that someone could struggle with. A little less than 2 years ago, my sister went through a surgery to fix a group of muscles that were deteriorating with time. After this surgery she had to learn to walk again. This was very hard and painful for her to endure for a few months. To make things easier for her we started taking her to physical therapy and I got to watch the progress from when she could barely stand up, to where now she can almost jog. I had to take her to many physical therapy appointments and I was inspired by how gentle and patient the Physical Therapist were with her. After a few appointments and watching them I knew I wanted to do the same and help people who need help.

This I Believe - Ayami Takada

Since I was a child, I have liked doing sports. I had taken ballet lessons for 12 years since I was four years old. Besides, I had joined in track and field club for six years. When I trained for a track and field competition, I injured my leg. I was sad and disappointed because I could not run the race. However, one of my team athletic trainers paid attention to not only to my injury but also my mental health. I could change my mind and practice hard after recovering my injury because of the athletic trainer's care. I decided I would like to be such an athletic trainer who can contribute to athletes' performance. The athletic trainer said to me I should study in the United States in order to get good skills and become a professional trainer. That is why I came here from Japan. I just started my studying for my career though, I faced many problems such as culture differences, language problem, and studying. However, I try to enjoy my new life and continue to work hard to achieve my goals.

Personal Narrative – Kenedie Henley

My life has been an interesting roller coaster. Moving schools 3 different times, having a dad who was always gone with work, losing two people in week, and not to mention just being busy all the time. In high school I was always known for having a lot of friends, but in reality there were times where I never felt more alone. My friends always chose to make fun of me and pick out my insecurities and not to mention I was the only single one out of all of my friends. Senior year I finally found my friend group. The group that was always there for me and never put me down. They taught me to embrace my insecurities and to love myself more. My family and friends heavily affected my college decision. They helped me pick a school where I truly felt at home at. A school that was just the perfect size. I feel like being at Arkansas State is shaping my character because I joined an amazing sorority and I have found some amazing friends already. They're pushing me to do well in school and to overall help me become a better person.

Personal Narrative – Mary Fincher

My family and values have played a major role in who I am today. I come from a large yet close knit family. My parents taught me to stay true to my values, embrace diversity, be accepting of others, and always keep an open mind. In addition, they taught me about the importance of having strong values such as religion, family, honesty, compassion, and responsibility. Sports activities played a part in who I am today as well. Through track and cheer, I learned that hard work, determination, and perseverance are keys to success. While participating in sports, I learned about setting goals for myself and working hard to achieve them. Athletics also taught me about teamwork. My strong family values are a major reason I chose Arkansas State University to further my education. I am only an hour away from home, and I have a sister and cousin attending ASU as well. In addition, my goal is to be a physical therapist, and ASU has one of the best doctorate programs. Attending ASU will introduce me to human diversity, as I am from a small town and attending a small high school. Living on campus will allow me to be more independent and teach me about responsibility. Hopefully, my college experience here at ASU will help me to achieve my goals and be successful in life.

Personal Narrative – Logan Gray

My personal journey that has led me to where I am today is very normal. I have always been told throughout my life that I need to work hard for my dreams, and to work hard to earn everything I get. I've always looked up to my parents for how hard they work. With five kids I'm sure it wasn't always easy keeping food around the house. My mom has been working two jobs on top of trying to get her Master's degree, and my dad works construction which is not easy by any means. Whenever I think about giving up or doing anything not to the fullest I always think about how hard my parents work every day, and it keeps me going. Working hard for everything got me scholarships, and let me be a part of the football team. I think being a student and athlete at A-State will benefit me in life, because this school values hard work and dedication. Those values fit me the best because that's what I grew up on. I am really looking forward to my years at A-State, and I plan to give it everything I got on the football field and in the classroom.

This I Believe – Trevor Hawley

Tim Notke once said, "Hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard." I have lived by this quote for most of my life. Growing up I have always wanted to do with the sports world whether it was playing sports, or learning about them. I found out very early on I wasn't blessed with the physical attributes that were needed to play sports in college, however I was blessed with the knowledge to talk about any sport. I took advantage of that blessing, and I would talk about sports wherever I went. My dreams were to become a broadcaster for ESPN. I came to Arkansas State because they told me on my visit that I could intern with ESPN my senior year. I knew this was the right place for me even though that was the first time I was on the campus, or even in Jonesboro for that fact. I grew up wanting to be a Razorback all my life. I will always remember that hard work wins over talent when talent fails to work hard because that is what brought me to Jonesboro, and I will continue to live that like.

This I Believe – Brennen Grimes

I have always loved new opportunities and exploring them. These new opportunities must be taken alone though. Sometimes it can be hard to do this. My friends and I were all on different paths and I knew after high school we would all go our separate ways and go on our own paths to success. I have always loved sports and wanted to work in the sports industry after I graduated college. I wanted to go somewhere that was filled with new opportunities and had a great sports management program and that was Arkansas State. Once I stepped onto Arkansas State my I realized that my path to success could go into countless different directions. In high school, I did not participate in many things. All I wanted to do was do my work and hang out with my friends on the weekends. I wanted to change that aspect about me in college. The amount of success you have in life depends on how much work you are willing to put into it. Arkansas State is like a family that will help you anyway they can see you succeed. As a student here, I want to surround myself with people that believe in me and want me to succeed. Making positive connections with people is a big part of life. I want my story to continue at Arkansas State with positive people surrounding me.

This I Believe – Daley Belew

Ever since I could walk I always had a basketball in my hands. Growing up the youngest of four children, who all loved the game of basketball, I developed a love for playing. Even throughout elementary school and playing different sports, I always knew basketball was what I wanted to excel at. I worked very hard throughout my younger years and high-school, I became an All-State player my junior year and again my senior year. I had a few offers from smaller schools, but became burnt out of playing. I decided not to play in college and came to Arkansas State. I still have the same amount of work and dedication, and intend to use it in my studies. I have many friends and a brother here at Arkansas-State. Throughout my years of playing basketball I understood teamwork, relationships, and comradery. I made some of my closest friends through the game and many of those friends are here at Arkansas State. I have made many more close friends at college and hope I can be a positive person in their lives. Throughout my years at college, I hope to continue working hard and to excel in my field and to be there for the people that I care about.

Becoming a Red Wolf – Harley Kilgore

When I graduated from Palestine, I was no longer a small-town girl, I was young adult, ready to see what life had in store for me. Going to a town with a population of 300 to a population of 76,000, changes a lot of things. There's more places to hang out at, you don't have to drive around just to have fun. There's way more places to eat, even though I'm a "picky eater," as my mother likes to call it. But with the ups, there are always downs. At Palestine, everyone knew each other. We all were friends, even though sometimes there were fights in school. My class had only 60 seniors graduating. Among those 60, we all knew each other pretty well. With me coming to A-State, I don't know anyone. All of my friends are either at our Community College back home, or they are somewhere else. There are some here, and I know them, I wasn't close to them like I am to my friends. I heard that the first year of college, you're going to be alone until you find your people, and I believe that is very true. I haven't found my group of people yet, there's been bits and pieces, but not the whole puzzle. I'm pretty sure I'm not going to find the missing pieces for a while, but I'm not really looking as of right now. I'm just worried about getting through my freshman year as a red wolf. I took college courses back in my hometown, so I have the foundation, I just don't have the experience yet. But I assume the time will come.

My Purpose – Ellie Albrecht

I remember when I was six years old, and I would stand in front of my parents bathroom mirror imaging what it was going to be like when I grew up; that's all I wanted to do was to grow up and be successful in my life. From that point on I knew I wanted to go big in something that I loved which turned out to be the medical field. Moving forward, when I turned ten years old my running career began, and I was instantly in love with it for I had finally found my purpose and joy in life. I enjoy the school atmosphere and learning all together. This love for learning combined with my loved running career followed me all the way through high school to now, and has shaped who I am today, and continues to do so here at Arkansas State University. I can defiantly say I'm living my dream that I've always dreamed about ever since I was six years old standing in front of that mirror, and if I could back to visit my six old self I would say "Don't worry and keep dreaming because in a couple of years you're going to be living the opportunity of a life time."

Cherishing the Moments – Nya McLaurin

I believe in cherishing the moments you have with people because you never know when those moments will come to an end. We live in a world where everything is so fast-paced that we are not able to appreciate the time that we have with our loved ones or the people that are important to us. Although you may think that you have spent enough time with people, when that time is taken away from you, you quickly realize that the time you spent with them is very little. Being a senior in the graduating class of 2020 made me realize I need to appreciate the time that I have to spend with people. When the global pandemic, Covid-19, hit everything was put to a halt. It even seemed like our lives were put on hold. We could no longer go to school, go out to eat, or do many other activities that we were used to doing on a regular basis. The main component of quarantine I struggled with was not being able to see my friends. The fact that I could not graduate with some of the people closest to me broke my heart. But I learned a very important lesson from this. Cherish every moment you have with your friends when you go to college. Choosing to be an A-State Red Wolf is one of the best decisions I've made and I've only been here for 2 months. I can tell that the friends I have made here will be lifelong friends and choosing the Institution Arkansas State will open numerous doors for me in the future.

Personal Narrative – Jatoria Mitchell

I grew up in a family of caregivers, my grandmother and mother always have had big hearts for people and always were there when anyone needed help, so being a person of care and helpfulness was instilled in me at young age. Also, I had family members who were not able to do for themselves so I would always help. Arkansas State was not my first choice, I had many options to choose from. Although this was my cheapest offer, I just knew this was where i was meant to be. My career goal is to become an occupational therapist and with this profession I can do something that is significant to me, which is caring and helping that can have huge impact on people and their lives and even with myself. Before coming here, I know that this a great school and they will help me become the best person I can be and prepare me for a new journey. With opportunity coming here, I know I am able to widening my horizon and be able to development additional skills to strive to accomplish all the goals I have set for myself.

This I Believe – Georgia White

I believe that the best way to learn is by listening to the experiences of others. When I was 10 years old my parents told me that we would be moving from my small town in Arkansas to Lima, Peru. At first I was skeptical about my parents' decision, but looking back I can't believe that I had not wanted to move overseas, since being outside of the US has been an experience I would not trade for the world.

At the school I attended we went out and did many service trips to the poorer communities in and around the Lima area. I had gone on these trips thinking that I was going to help these people and make their lives better, and although I am sure we helped them, the people I was working with taught me so much.

One of the trips I liked to go on was to a girls' home where there were about 15 girls (4-18 years old) who had either been abandoned or run away because of abuse. This home provided them with a basic education, food, and shelter.

While on these trips we played volleyball, painted, and just spent time with the girls, forming relationships. By simply listening to their stories I learned more lessons about kindness, forgiveness, hope, compassion, and love than I could ever hope to learn from a thousand textbooks. This lesson remained true in the Dominican Republic, Malaysia, and I hope to continue this pattern while at A-State.

The Story of Me – Kirsten Jones

School as a young child was not my thing. I struggled a lot, causing me to have to do extra work, like tutoring, ELO, and even summer school one summer. It was all to benefit me in the end, but I still was not a fan. As I grew older, I did not want to always struggle and I wanted to prove I was better than that, so that is what I did. I focused in class and I worked hard in everything I did to get the best results. I took the classes to prepare me for my future. I even got into advanced classes throughout high school and I also took college classes my senior year. With the hard work I had been putting into my schooling, I was able to graduate with over a 4.0 GPA and I also got a 30 on the ACT. With this, I knew I could go anywhere and get a decent scholarship, but at Arkansas State, I had family there that are like my best friends. That is when I worked to get here and get the scholarships needed to help pay for college. I already knew I wanted to do pharmacy, so I am here now getting my BA in Chemistry to allow me to go to pharmacy school afterwards. All I have left to do, is continue my hard work and achieve the goals that I have set for myself, and my dreams will come true.

Anonymous 1

Softball has been a huge shaping factor throughout my whole life. I started playing at a young age and always dreamed of continuing in college. Being offered a spot on the Red Wolf softball team here at A-State meant that I got to make that dream a reality. For me, making the choice to attend A-State was clear. I loved the campus, the community, and all of the opportunities to learn and grow as a person. Being a student here is like being a part of one big family, and that's super important to a freshman like myself. Having such a welcoming community right off the bat is very encouraging. This type of care and support are huge reasons to continue my journey here. Potentially having my journey shaped by such an amazing community is an advantage that I cannot pass up. I am choosing to pursue my education here, because I truly believe that A-State is the perfect place for me. I trust that I will get all of the proper education and life training necessary to have a successful career and lead a happy life after college. I know that my experience at A-State will be everything I want and more. I can't wait to see what the future holds for me and my fellow A-State students.

Anonymous 2

Growing up, I was hardly around my extended family, who all live in Arkansas. My parents and siblings and I moved around the country frequently, but we always tried to make time to visit grandparents and other family members in Arkansas. When my grandfather died in 2011, I felt distraught that I hadn't gotten to know him better that I wasn't around him enough as I should have been. How could I change the narrative, to not go down the same path for my surviving grandparents and other family members? I decided to attend A-State for this reason. Being at A-state means being around my family and making up for time long lost.

Anonymous 3

My personal journey has not entirely been an easy one. I have panic disorder and major depressive disorder. I try not to let these two things control my life, but it has affected my journey and who I am today. These disorders have led me to be more open minded in understanding people. You never know what someone is going through. Throughout high school I was an overachiever because I thought academic excellence would make me feel better. I worked hard to get the grades I had, and I continue to do that to this day. Arkansas State University was the first college to recognize my efforts, even if I felt that they were not enough. My journey to become a Red Wolf was based on the fact that the campus felt like home. I grew up here, I went to every game, I supported my brother in the band, and eventually made it my dream school. I saw everything the campus offered, including counseling services, which was perfect for me. I saw the clubs that accepted people struggling with the same things as me and knew I would flourish as a Red Wolf. Now that I am a student at A-State I feel more accomplished with myself, and I utilize the options that are given to me. The department I'm in is full of people who have a passion for what they do, and I feel they will shape my journey forever with their teachings. I plan on using the ideas I learn from here

Anonymous 4

My journey has impacted me tremendously over the years. My parents are a big part in who I am as well as my friends. I was a very athletic person and that was my whole life until I found God my junior year in high school. Due to my friends helping me on this path and my parents I switched my thoughts of going for athletics but doing what he wants for me instead. This is the reason why I am wanting to become a teacher. I believe this is what God wants me to do with my life and for him. I believe that ASU is where it should be done as well and every little thing lining up is what truly is helping me believe that what I am doing right now is what I should be doing.

Anonymous 5

Hi, I'm a freshman at Arkansas State University. But I'm going to skip the small talk and get right to the point. It's been a journey, a rocky one, actually. The topic on everyone's mind is the global pandemic of the Covid-19 illness. Despite the loss, tears, and misfortune, we are living. Despite it all. On this bumpy road to Arkansas State University, it has taught me one thing especially- persistence. As a senior in high school, for my spring sports season, we all had to pick a word to resemble a goal that we wanted to accomplish, either in ourselves or within the sport. As a naïve teen living in our normalcy, I knew that it was a good word to strive for. And I left it at that. Once our world went into total chaos and panic, I started to think about that word. And it brought me to this conclusion, our life is a path. That path has hills and valleys. And when things are good, we are on the top of the hill, but when life gets bad, you may find yourself in a valley. And speaking from the heart, I'd much rather be in a valley, climbing my way up a hill...That's what persistence is. Personally, for me, Arkansas State University has helped me climb my hill. I'm not saying that it will always be easy, I'm saying to surround yourself with people who push you to your best interest, and that's exactly what I've found here, and I hope to be able to share with this you and continue to find myself.

Anonymous 6

Grace. This has been a resounding theme in my journey. Grace is being given a gift you never deserved, something that is beyond anything you thought anybody could ever give to you. It is accepting your faults and failures but also accepting other's love in spite of them. Through grace I was given the opportunity to attend a school that offered a plethora of history classes. Through grace I was given the opportunity to study under teachers and historians that understood the difference in the professions and the value of both. And through grace I was given the opportunity to come here and study to be both as they were. None of these things were deserved but far from causing me to depreciate my own value, grace has taught me to see the incredible value in others, a kind word, and an opportunity. The beginning of my journey has helped me to understand grace and to be thankful for each and every gift. Now this part of my journey will help me learn how to live it out. If grace were just given to be hoarded inside how could it ever find itself alive? I need to help grace be alive. It is a light to be shared and passed between each of us given without reserve, to everyone without prejudice or discrimination. Being a Red Wolf and having this opportunity to learn and grow will help me learn how to pass on the light, to pass on the grace.

Anonymous 7

When I was growing up, I always liked to discover how and why things happen in a certain way. I realize that even back then, I liked smaller, lesser known details and how they connected to a bigger picture. I enjoyed how a country in the world affected another country. I never understood why history fascinated me back then until now. That was what history was and it has fascinated me ever since I realized that. By the time I was taking those advanced classes for history in high school, I thought that I would have a career in music. When I looked back on that, I found out that a career in music was not for me because I had to try to force myself to become a musician. This was when I discovered who I was and what journey I wanted to take. Being a musician no longer was a fun or interesting idea to me because I knew that history's rich and complex relationships made me feel like myself.

I wanted to make sure that I was educated well in history and did not want to choose any college to go to. The sheer variety of history courses I am allowed to take from now to when I graduate was so large to me, that I chose Arkansas State University. The classes are taught in a similar way to how my advanced and concurrent courses were back in high school. They taught about the relationships between multiple kinds of policies, people, and beliefs that were in the world. Arkansas State University, with its similar, but more in depth history courses can help me continue my journey of becoming a historian. The university will shape me and how I can study history.

Personal Narrative - Austin Sloan

I have had my life planned out for as long as I can remember, but one thing I cannot write down in my planner or on a bucket list is what life has planned for me. I never anticipated being an A-State student; in fact, I've never wanted to attend this school at all. But, as always, life has a way of leading me off the path I think I should be traveling. I am supposed to be at an art school in Georgia right now. I am supposed to be beginning my journey towards a career. But I am here. In my hometown. At the school I vowed to never attend. The map I have drawn out for my life never included ASU. My map never even included staying in Arkansas past my 18th birthday. Life is funny. I guess what life is trying to tell me is that where I think I am supposed to be might not be where I'm meant to be after all, and maybe I should just take in all that these new and unforeseen paths have to offer before I find the clearing in the bushes that allows me to return to my path. After all, adventures aren't nearly as fun when you're following a map.

This I Believe – Anna Lee Murry

Overall, I have had a relatively good life. I have great parents that support me no matter what and love me unconditionally. I have an older brother that I have recently gotten very close to and he just got married so I now have an incredible sister in law. I always looked up to my brother and felt like I was living in his shadow. Eventually I realized I cannot live through him. Throughout middle school and junior high I didn't have many friends. In high school, I made the best friends and they became my family. I had an incredible high school experience. I was the girl that was friends with everyone and could walk down the hall and say hey and have a conversation with anyone. I was basically born to go to ASU. My entire family has gone here; my mom, dad, brother, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and my grandfather even worked here for a while. Despite growing up in an A-state household, I did not think I would go here. All of my best friends went to U of A and so for a while I was set on that, but ASU just felt like home. I am glad that I decided to come here because I have met so many new great people and throughout my time as a red wolf, I hope to be able to help other people find their place.

Knowing Your Passion – Allysa Rogers

I believe that deep down, we know who we want to be. I think that it's just a little hidden memory box deep inside, buried under the thoughts and feelings of yesterday, just waiting to be found.

Throughout my childhood, I always felt the need to help others. I was that kid who was regularly bullied in school and went to the counselors at least three times a week. Sometimes I would go just to learn something new from my counselor.

She had become a role model for me. Eventually, my counselor would ask me what I thought about her ideas on reaching other students who didn't want to see her.

She had created a small team of students in my school to help others in our school. Each week we would meet and discuss different ways to encourage and help others.

Later in my school years, I saw the school's social worker for my anxiety, and in no time, she became a role model. I believe that at that moment, I knew that I wanted to be like her. I was soon discouraged, though when my family or family friends would say I probably couldn't do that. I struggled with my own mental health in the past, and they were worried that it would be too much. Part of me was always let down when they said that, and part of me always knew that I needed to be a social worker. I knew who I wanted to be.

This I Believe - Haley Hightower

I had been moved around to different schools since I was in kindergarten. My parents got divorced when I was in fourth grade. My mother went missing when I was sixteen years old, close to the town I call home. All of these things that happened to me ultimately led me to where I am today. I do wish these things would have not happened, but without them happening I would not be who I am today, and where I am today. My senior year of high school, I had gotten accepted into two colleges. In two very different places. One was here at A-State, about an hour away from my hometown, and the other was in Dallas, close to family, but about 8 hours away. I had spent months contemplating my decision, whether to stay close to the small town where my mom went missing, or pack up and start a new life far away. Then, I made the decision to be close to my hometown, but not too close. Yes, my mom did go missing there, but it was the people there that helped me through that hard time, and friends that became like family. So, I wanted to stay close just a little longer. And, then, I found even more family at A-State. A-State made me feel at home in such little time, like I belong. So, now it feels like I have two families in different towns. And, I know I made the right choice.

Personal Narrative - Madelynne Sutherland

The experiences that I have had in my life have led me to where I am today. I have trust issues from the amount of people who have broken my trust. I have separation anxiety from my dad keeping me and my brother from our mom for four months when we were younger. Due to these experiences, and more I am who I am. I value family, and honesty. I hold those close to me very tightly, I am very empathetic, I know what people are going through and I just want to help them. Yes I wish that I hadn't gone through what I did sometimes, but most of the time I am very grateful for the life and experiences I have had, I believe that I have become a better person because of what has happened to me. I picked A-State mainly due to my anxieties, it is a small campus compared to others, I already had people up here that I knew, and I had been up here a lot last year because my brother was in the band, all of that helped calm some of my anxiety and I knew I would do better coming here. I believe that being a red wolf will further my journey by giving me connections and friends that I wouldn't have had before, it gives me a community to be a part of.

Personal Narrative - Ashlynn Rippy

Growing up in the Jonesboro area, I've always seen the students at A-State around town, at games and events, and staying connected in the community. Being involved in high school allowed me to see the people I had known for years grow and stay involved in Paragould by being so close to home. Because of this, I had only considered one other school, even though it was five hours away from home. After visiting the college, I decided against going there because of the price difference between that school and A-State. Even though money was a large factor in choosing between the schools, the idea of being that far away from home was an even bigger factor due to the stress put on my family this summer when my sister passed away. With that weight placed on my family, I could not even consider moving that far away or having my parents pay for my education, causing more stress on their lives. After the loss of my sister, I realized that I was never as close with her as I should have been. With this, I am attempting to ensure that I grow closer to my brother as we barely could tolerate each other before he moved to college. As an Arkansas State student now, I have become involved in different organizations that can allow me to become involved and stay involved in the community after college. After coming to Arkansas State University, I cannot imagine myself anywhere else.

Personal Narrative - Garrett Doherty

I believe in change. Some people say they do not like change and that they have a hard time adjusting to it. They say that change just makes life complicated and it is just too uncertain. Because of this, I can see why people would hate change. People like to control things: they like to have plans and they like to stick to those plans. I can relate to this because I plan out every day of the week. I like control and I like knowing what is going to happen, but I love change. Change is the one thing that is out of our control as humans. Change is also the only constant thing in our lives. We do not know what is going to change and we do not know when it is going to change, but we know that it is going to change. Knowing that there are things in this world that are out of my control gives me some sort of comfort. I am comforted in the fact that I know I am not the only person going through change. Change is why I chose Arkansas State. I felt like I needed something different in my life, and coming to A-State was a big change for me. However, as I walk around campus and look at other students, I am comforted knowing I am not alone. We are all going through changes in our lives, but we can all get through it together.

Thank you to this year's first year students for their vulnerability and participation in the common reader event. We hope that their stories inspire you as much as they have inspired us.

A special thanks to each of the FYE faculty who helped to make this project possible through their continued encouragement of our first year students. Each of your stories matters, and we are excited to a part of your A-State journey.



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