Good Afternoon, my name is Madison Wessells, and today I will be talking about my journey to wanting to become a nurse and what caused me to want to join the medical field. I am from a small town on the Eastern Shore called Nelsonia which consists of about 100 houses and a gas station. My family consists of my mother and father, my little sister, and my grandparents and this is a picture of them. Due to problems in the household, my grandparents took me under their wing and raised me from the age of 12. I am incredibly thankful because, without them, I do not know where I would be today.

Since I was little, I have been told by my family that I was meant to be a judge or a lawyer because I loved to argue and because I was apart of a law enforcement family. Also, I babysat for the Commonwealth’s Attorney, so law enforcement surrounded me all of my life. I knew that I wanted a career that allowed me to help people, but I didn’t know what specific field. For most, helping people is a someday thing, but since I joined the girl scouts in 2nd grade, it has been an everyday thing. When I was a freshman in high school, I played softball for the varsity team, and the head coach, Mr. Palmer, also coached football. He asked me to be a trainer for the upcoming season, and I wanted to impress him so I could have a starting spot, so I became a trainer. Also in the fall of my sophomore year, I took an anatomy class because Mr. Palmer was also the anatomy teacher, so I wasn't worried about not doing well in the class. He told me that I had a gift for nursing and that I needed to pursue it. Mr. Palmer often said to me that he was continuously impressed with my performance in class and on the sidelines of the football games. Because of Mr. Palmer's encouragement, I joined the fire department and participated in the EMT Academy during the fall of my junior year. My family was not on board with me going through EMT because I was also the head student athletic trainer, taking a full high school course load, including AP and dual enrollment courses and playing sports so they did not think that I could keep my GPA up. I was determined to finish EMT because it allowed me to pursue a career that I fell in love with in that anatomy class sophomore year. I was able to graduate from the EMT academy with honors, and I had perfect scores for my psychomotor exams.

I then went on to pass the National Registry test on the first try which was not the case for most of my classmates who were much older than me and had a lot less on their plates. This is my EMT license which I earned at the age of 16 and is very important to me because it shows my dedication to the field of emergency medicine and reminds me that I can do anything when I put my mind to it. This is a picture of my fire department family who supported me during the whole process and knew what I was going through and helped me when my family couldn't. When I began running calls, I started to see how the nurses interacted with the patients that I brought in. I wanted to become a nurse because it combined my passion for helping people with my love for medicine; however, my family was and is still pressuring me to be a doctor. After doing an internship with one of the Nurse Practitioners in the emergency department that I knew, I decided that I wanted to be a Nurse Practitioner in the ED. I love the ED because like running calls on the ambulance, you never know who your next patient will be or what their symptoms or injuries will be. I wanted to be able to interact with my patients more than a doctor in general practice would and help them in their time of need whether it was emotional or medical support.

As an EMT, I have seen many parts of my community the most do not see such as the lack of access to healthcare due to cost and the inability to find transportation. The Eastern Shore's population consists mainly of the elderly, immigrants and people below the poverty line.  As I grow in the medical field, I someday hope to start a mobile medical clinic that travels to the impoverished areas and provide medical care that most do not have access to. Even though I am from a rural area where most people become watermen, work in a chicken plant or join law enforcement, I have been able to get off the shore to go to college and follow my dream of becoming a nurse. Thank you for listening to my speech, and I hope you have a great day.