

## National Youth Safety Essay Scholarship Contest Winner

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My father is a quiet man who works in a dairy factory. Upon hearing that I was getting my OSHA card, he replied "I'm proud, Sweetie." Those three words were music to my ears coming from a man who's incredibly non-verbal. After that, I was determined to get my OSHA certification card. That wallet sized piece of plastic was a golden ticket, in my eyes. I broke the completion record, at my school. I was certified weeks before the rest of my class. No one really understood the point of the OSHA certification or the point in getting the card. I knew the true meaning. Every single one of those cards is a symbol of the millions of lives that OSHA has saved.

At my father's factory, every single person is OSHA certified. What would that factory be without OSHA? I've witnessed my father exit his job several times wearing, what I now know as, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). He wears safety glasses, gloves, and steel toe work boots. If any of this equipment is forgotten, then he'd be unprotected against any workplace hazards including contamination and sharp objects. Upon completion of the PPE module, I was shocked to know that there are different types of eye protection, gloves, and even shoes that are appropriate for different tasks. As workers exit the factory, I have found that I can recognize who works in which section based on their mandatory PPE. My father and his coworkers avoid hazards every single day when they wear proper PPE.

My father is wiser than me, but my recent OSHA knowledge has been put to the test every single day, in my own home. I've been able to recognize everyday things that are hazardous. I've caught multiple people on numerous occasions pulling chargers out of outlets by their cords. I've seen my own sister flip things on a heated pan with her bare hands. I've seen family members on the road who are clearly unaware of their own surroundings. I've even needed a casual reminder of how to properly carry heavy objects more times than I can count. Proving that I could carry a larger load than anyone else was oftentimes my naïve goal. These are everyday scenarios that could cause serious injuries if not handled properly. I've expressed my concerns with my family members. We have even developed methods to prevent any injuries in our household, for the future.

OSHA helped me better understand my rights and to use my voice when I notice potential hazards, at school. Last year, I was the president of my middle school robotics team. I was operating on a solar powered car mostly constructed out of wood. When using a Dremel tool, I was told to use eye protection. Upon taking off my eyeglasses, I'd notice the wood chips that had flown into my hair. Occasionally, the wood chips would maneuver their way over the glasses and into my eyes. Almost a year later, after receiving my OSHA certification, I realized my rights and advocated for appropriate goggles that would protect my eyes when using similar tools. I shared my new-found knowledge with my robotics teacher, and we endorsed goggles instead of glasses. We even organized a seminar on proper PPE in the robotics room. OSHA has a positive impact on my community and school. Thanks to my certification, I can avert my fellow students and staff from preventable hazards.

I have many years left in my high school experience. I'm glad that OSHA has helped me better understand potential safety hazards and how to avoid them. I'm thankful to OSHA every day for keeping my father and I safe. I am now, the vice president of my high school robotics team as a freshman. I might not be a professional, but I look forward to sharing my knowledge with others, in the future.