

Statement of Purpose:

Ryan McClary

As a 43-year forever curious world traveler, I've journeyed with the love of my life on a beautifully non-traditional path to a child in our home, fought in two wars, and learned core life lessons that provide me an exceptionally unique potential to succeed in developing curriculum. My unique observations, experiences, training, and personal relationships these past four decades provided me with a laser focus and strong drive. I am not so prideful to believe that I hold a unique solution to a broad problem; rather, I am firmly confident that my initiative, knowledge, skills, and abilities will enable me to create a strong positive impact as a member of the foster training team.

I've been a curious person for as far back as I can remember. One of my earliest memories, five-years-old, riding in the car with my mother, as we passed homeless on the streets of Los Angeles I wondering if I could spend five minutes living in their minds seeing the world through their eyes. Who would I see, what story would I hear, when did they come to live here, why do they stay? This childhood desire, became the cornerstone of a life spent observing, researching, and reading, while thinking deeply on a topic or set of topics related to a practical objective or goal. As a world traveler of six of the seven continents, who lived four years abroad in Germany, I've learned that we are more alike than we are different, and our struggles are more common than unique. To this day, I have not lost my inner five-year-old "why" mentality; a forever curious world traveler mindset that blessed me with great patience for children and admiration of their innocence, curiosity, willingness to learn, and love without abandon.

As a loving husband of 17-years, our daughter came to us by way of a blessing disguised as three failed rounds of IVF and the crushing possibility that maybe children were not a part of our lives. Then in 2014, we came to live in San Antonio and realized there were plenty of children that needed a good home in the Texas foster system. We found hope as foster-adoptive parents and ten months later we welcomed our beautiful daughter to our family. After moving twice post-adoption, our grateful trio resides with our two dogs and three cats just outside of San Antonio, TX in peaceful La Vernia. During our foster parent training, I noticed the curriculum was focused on litigious-concerns with only a minor focus on training the foster parent to account for what they bring into the situation, or what types of situations the children are coming into their homes from, combined with a very poor public-facing training material. However, in this subpar situation, I met one of the most inspirational people of my life, Linda Hurtubise (born 8 May 51, died 15 Dec 18). Linda was the first foster parent training lead I met, and she taught me that life should be of service and foster parents must have a sole motivation: the children. I can remember vividly the day we met at a foster parent fair put on by DFPS. When we finally made it around to the table she was sitting at, she didn't try to offer us any money or gimmicks, rather she just asked one question, "Why do you want to be foster parents?" We answered, we would like children and we want to help those children who need a home. She then asked the same question again, we offered the same answer, then she asked a third time, and while exchanging a sideways glance between husband and wife, we offered the same answer for a third time. This time she said, "Don't forget that, if it's not for the children, then we don't want you. This must be about the children first and always." Linda is both my inspiration and the one I owe a depth of gratitude I was never afforded the opportunity to repay. From this adventure came a strong desire to improve foster parent training curriculum dedicated to Linda and the ideas she lived.

In my 22-years serving our nation, I reached the pinnacle of the enlisted force, a Chief Master Sergeant as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician (military bomb squad). During those two decades, I spent three and a half years deployed all over the globe, with four tours in

direct combat. One notable four-year assignment, blessed me to lead a team of seven subject matter experts to write technical orders, publications, requirement documents, and support the acquisition of material solutions to fulfil validated requirements at the Department of Defense level; a mission requiring hours of research, evaluation, and compilation of information to create decisional briefs that steer multi-million-dollar projects (robots, x-rays, bomb suits, jammers, etc.). Broadly, the military taught me discipline, maturity, and a keen sense of responsibility. Specifically, the military honed my rapid perception of complex issues that can be framed into approachable problems with viable solutions and pragmatic outcomes. In all, I've completed one career with exceptional success that afforded me both a pension and four years of school funding via the post-9-11 GI Bill; it is now my sole desire to spend the rest of my life serving our foster children, foster parents, and the foster agencies facilitating their care.

My core life lessons come from many sources and help to guide my journey. Simply put, we are the products of our knowledge, training, and experiences. The most powerful lesson I've learned, is to listen deeply, the key to connection and the universal human need, to be seen, heard, and valued. The second most powerful lesson is vulnerability--we are all human, we all struggle, and it is in the sharing of our struggles with another that we can gather strength for the struggles yet to come. Third, is the power of purpose; it provides a true north during the storms of life. Combined connection, vulnerability, and purpose provide three enduring lessons broadly applicable to life. There is no magic pill for the lifelong process of personal growth; it occurs when we struggle well in the hard work of life.

In summary, the wisdom gained from a life of world travel enabled me to see commonality where others see differences. The journey of trails and tribulations my wife and I journeyed together lifted the blinders from our eyes to a world of need. The military time exposed me to the best and worst of humanity, and served both as my crucible and the hone to my mental edge. Throughout this journey, I've met heroes like Linda and learned lessons from centuries past. These experiences, and many more like them, provide me with unique observations, experiences, training, and personal relationships which grant me an exceptionally unique potential to succeed in curriculum development, help those around me succeed, and live a persistent life with the child welfare service community and the field of foster care.