**Prompt 1: Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

Under the blazing sun in Oman, I was greeted with blasts of scorching heat. Sweat leaked from my head and sizzled as it collided with the asphalt road. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a thin figure. I turn to see a malnourished dog limping down the road. Its hunger was apparent from its rib cage protruding out of its body. Its crusted tongue dangled from its withered mouth. “Should I give it food?” I thought. But before I could attempt to move, the stray dog became aware of my presence and bolted out of sight. The reality set in that I was unable to help and my heart sank. If only I could do something to help them…

Stray animals will travel long distances to scavenge for food. Unfortunately, they will go so far as to venture into the city where the consequences can be fatal, since they will get shot by the police. If I really wanted to help these animals, I should tackle the problem of scarce food sources because it was the driving factor to them traveling great distances.

After brainstorming, I opted to build an automatic animal feeder because it would feed strays whilst eliminating human presence so they do not feel threatened. This was vital considering their poor treatment from residents. It was also the most practical option because it would lead them away from the city. I felt like I finally found a purpose because my engineering skills could be harnessed to help countless lives.

The first prototype I constructed was a feeder with a plywood base and a remote food dispensation feature. It took advantage of the abundant sunlight in Oman through the use of a solar panel. When it was completed, I started to question whether the machine was operating at its full potential because it only dispensed a small amount of food distributed in a small area.

Days later, I saw a post from BAWABALI, one of the biggest animal rescue shelters in Indonesia. It was about people helping stray animals and I witnessed how hard they worked. I thought it would be a good opportunity for me because I was going back to Indonesia in the summer. I got in contact with them and, with their guidance, I developed a plan to build a new prototype for their main shelter.

During my time in Indonesia, I designed the second prototype using computer aided design. I followed up on their advice of incorporating a more rectangular shape for stability and increased the food capacity. I showed them my latest design and they were able to visualize the best place for the feeder. After receiving their approval, I started building.

Days of struggling followed, the whirring of motors and the clanging of food pellets against the metal bowl echoing through the night. It could only mean one thing: the feeder was functioning. Bursting with joy, I observed the machine operate expeditiously. The upgrades had enhanced the feeder so the staff could benefit from not having to refill it often. I was proud that I completed it, yet anxious to see how the stray animals would react.

The following morning, I donated the feeder to BAWABALI along with some dog food. A sense of relief washed over me when I saw that the animals were not fighting over the food. Their wagging tails insinuated their gratitude. Although I was pleased with my journey, I began to contemplate about the future designs I could be working on and how it can be altered to help more stray animals.

This experience has made me more confident in my ability to help this community because there were times throughout this journey where I doubted myself. It deepened my passion for helping animals to the point where I want to build high tech devices that can better their lives.

Hi Abian!

You’ve shown your passion and also motivation in helping these animals in a practical way. I believe including a background story about how you’ve come to love animals (stray dogs in particular) would definitely help clarify and set the tone of your essay. In addition, you can also include why you want to take your future major (mechanical engineering?) and how this knowledge will help you fulfil your passion in helping these strays in the future.

Best,

Melinda & Chiara

All-In Eduspace Editors