**Prompt #6 - *Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom. (350 words)* √**

“Dek?” (short for *adek* in Indonesian meaning little sibling), my mother taps me on the shoulder. She wondered what I had been doing at 6 am on a Saturday morning. Me, a sleepless 8-year-old, drawing a uniquely drawn skeletal system, personalized with a touch of color. I made small lines across its sections: from the metacarpals, the radius, the ulna, and the metatarsals. I repeated those names as I gave labels on my diagram, attempting to memorize even the tiniest of bones. This marked the beginning of my pursuit in biological sciences.

As time passed, my fascination grew and so did the desire to extend the application of my knowledge apart from concept memorization. Thus, I volunteered at a medical research facility in the remote island of Kei Besar, Maluku, Indonesia where I earned the opportunity to apprentice with resident doctors, nutritionists, and nurses. From ultrasounds to drawing blood, I was trained to conduct basic check-up procedures. Nonetheless, it was most exciting to meet the patients themselves, traveling from far villages to visit the clinic.

I met one mother in particular, whose stunted 9-month-old son weighed as much as he did when he was just 3 months old. Following my studies in the molecular biology unit, I advised the mother to balance the child’s reliance on carbohydrates (rice with vegetables alone) by increasing the intake of protein—a macronutrient that provides cell structure and support, thus crucial in one’s growth. Socioeconomic factors meant meat and poultry were unattainable on an everyday basis. Nevertheless, she would soon feed him eggs and *tempe* (fermented soybeans) instead, both accessible, yet protein-rich products.

To say the least, the experience had deepened my social conscience. It introduced me to the challenge of tackling medicine in conditions which hinder the maintenance of nutrition and health, namely geographic isolation and lack of necessary tools.

I believe pursuing biology is a step closer to enhancing the accessibility of healthcare for local underdeveloped areas in Indonesia. I especially aim to provide better education for the nourishment of mothers and their children, similar to my interaction in Kei.