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“The most dangerous worldview is the worldview of those have not viewed the world.” This is a quote I have read and heard a few times yet thought nothing of it. It was not until I had that sit down with myself and thought what my end-goal and aspiration in life is, that I fully understood. I believe that while we have the opportunity, we must see and importantly appreciate all the beauties this planet has to offer. That has led me to my goal of becoming a Wildlife Biologist/ Conservationist.

I studied for my first 3 years in Biology Pre-Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University. This is also where I signed to accept the offer to compete on their D1 Track & Field team as a 400-meter hurdler. Here, I was able to learn the skills to not only compete with a team but also how to juggle multiple important tasks at once. While I was expected to show up as an athlete every day, I was also carrying the weight of being a biology student. While being in Richmond I have had the opportunity to experience working in different fields which have helped me narrow down my career choice. The two that play the biggest role is my experience as a veterinarian assistant and well as a flight attendant. It was summer 2022 when I had the opportunity to become a veterinarian assistant at the Susan M. Markel Vet Hospital of Richmond, which is a non-profit hospital who also partners with Richmond SPCA. And while I did not know the importance of non-profit work when I accepted the position, shortly after beginning I completely understood. Here, I was able to assist in several different branches of surgical procedures from orthopedic, to dental, to simple spay and neuter. I also had the opportunity to learn and preform an array of laboratory tests as well as learn medical instruments and medications. Soon after my summer position as a veterinarian assistant was over, I spontaneously decided to take time from school my senior year and become a flight attendant for United Airlines. Without the experiences I gained as a flight attendant; learning new cultures, exploring new areas of the world I had never seen, and learning to adapt to much change: I would have never had the drive to finish out my degree, I say this because it did not take long for me to begin researching careers where I could live out my dream of working with exotic animals, and also be able to experience what I was able to experience as a flight attendant.

Growing up, I have always been extremely intrigued by all wildlife, domesticated animals, and even insects; Hence, why I began working with animals young. I believe I grew up in a great time to truly witness the almost downfall of our planet's health, as well as the health of our wildlife. From Christmas' where snow was mid-shin length to going years without seeing a single snowflake. And I am a firm believer, that if we take care of our planet and wildlife that it will return to us. And while it may be “too late” to reverse the effects of global warming, we can at least make our wildlife as comfortable as possible. I plan to become much more involved with this nonprofit conversation work in my near future. With the stepping stones already in place, knowledge, basic skills, and passion; I believe I have exactly what it takes to not only achieve this career goal but become very successful in it and make the difference in protecting our wildlife.

Yasmine Michelle