

Brett McCandlis Brown & Connor Scholarship

Paige Schroeder

I grew up in rural Nebraska where I was lucky enough to always have food on the table. However, when I arrived at the University of South Dakota for college, I was exposed to a world filled with food insecurity. I saw my friends and community struggle to access and afford basic necessities. I took an active role in combating this injustice by interning at the Community Connection Center during college which held the Vermillion Food Pantry. During this summer, I started exploring the inner workings of nonprofits and the deep-seeded issue of food insecurity. I found that the Vermillion Food Pantry in its life span had reduced insecurity rates in the county significantly becoming the heartbeat of a whole community. The legal and financial expertise of the staff made a huge difference in the success of the organization and by proxy improved services to the community.

My work and personal experience have driven me to make my corner of the world a better place by opening a food bank in a community of need. I learned from my internship that running a nonprofit takes financial and legal skill. As a result, I sought development positions in the nonprofit sector after graduating. I used these roles to supplement my education and learn the fundamentals of nonprofit finances. Last summer, I decided it was time to take the next step toward my goal by attending law school. I am certain that with legal and financial expertise in the nonprofit sector I will be able to successfully sustain a nonprofit operation that will benefit my community. I plan to do this while being an attorney, but eventually I would like to run my own nonprofit full-time. I dream of a nonprofit that is flexible to the needs of the community and my legal education will be the foundation on which the organization will be built.