My career in social work began back in 1995 as a strange twist of fate. I answered an ad in the local newspaper looking for a social worker in a long term care facility. The advertisement never stated that the candidate must possess a bachelor’s degree *in* social work.

During my interview, I was given a tour of the facility. Cinder block walls and stained linoleum flooring loomed throughout the building. The smells emanating from the halls were almost unbearable. I wondered to myself why I was even pursuing this position and wasting this woman’s time. When I saw the despondency of the people who called this place their home, my heart broke. It was a poignant and cathartic moment as I realized this was the career path I needed to pursue. I knew it was my calling to help one of the most vulnerable and forgotten populations: the elderly.

In spite of the fact that my degree was not in social work, I was hired. My position at that long-term care facility was both rewarding and challenging. While working under a MSW, I was able to obtain my LBSW with the State of Michigan. When that facility was sold, I moved to a skilled nursing facility and found the experience to be equally as fulfilling. While my boys were little, I took a brief hiatus from social work to undertake part-time employment as an early childhood educator, including taking classes in early childhood education. Although I loved every minute spent in the preschool classroom, my heart was always in geriatric social work. I returned to full-time work after my kids were older and I have never second-guessed my decision to return to the field of geriatrics. I continue to grow personally and professionally, always striving to be a strong advocate for the elderly.

While I have a wide variety of experiences - having worked in several situations including skilled nursing, working with the memory impaired and independent living - there is one unique experience I have which has helped to shape my role as a geriatric social worker. In my current position, I have had the amazing opportunity to work closely with survivors of the Holocaust. Having them share their stories with me and helping them live with their haunting memories has not only humbled me but has given me a deeper insight into the trauma of elder abuse. My goal is to use this empathetic knowledge with the educational tools I will achieve, through my MSW program, to meaningfully contribute to the prevention of elder abuse.

I believe older adults have the right to be free from all forms of abuse in their home environment. I have therefore made it my cause to prevent elder abuse and educate others about this silent suffering. Gathering and disseminating information about elder abuse is critical in bringing awareness to this issue on a national level. We must learn the signs of abuse and understand how abuse can rear its head in many forms. Changes in policies, mandatory reporting, advocacy, awareness, and professional training are needed to prevent and end abuse among our nation’s oldest citizens. Certified in the TPAAN (Training for the Prevention of Adult Abuse and Neglect) curriculum, I am committed to working closely with those who work closely with the elderly and train them to recognize the warning signs of abuse.

A Master’s of Social Work degree will further enhance my ability to advocate for this mission. It is also necessary to open doors that are currently closed. It has always been my dream to pursue a graduate degree. My oldest son recently graduated from high school. My admiration of his accomplishments has inspired me to fulfill that dream. As an adult learner, I have a much greater appreciation and respect for education than I did when I completed my undergraduate studies. My son’s work ethic and dedication to do well set a great example for his five younger siblings.

Thank you for allowing me to submit my application and explanation for how I would be a good candidate for your scholarship. Please consider my experience, tenacity, and my passion for social work. I plan to continue my devotion to older adults while broadening my knowledge of the social work profession. In conjunction with the support of my loving husband and wonderful family, I know my goals can be achieved. Thank you.