

HOSA-Future Health Professionals

eMAGAZINE

FALL 2025

Champions
of Resilience



Letter From The President

by **Ria Mohan**, 2025-26 HOSA International President



Dear HOSA Members and Future Health Professionals,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. As I sit down to write, I can't help but reflect on how the people reading these very words might be an ocean away, in another state, or even another country. Yet, what brought you here is grounded in shared purpose and unity. The HOSA community spans across borders, time zones, and languages. Each of our journeys looks different, and that diversity is what makes this organization so special. But at the heart of it all, we are connected by a common love for enacting positive change.

This year, we are honored to celebrate "*Champions of Change*," a theme that recognizes the unique power that each and every individual holds in leaving a meaningful impact on this world. As HOSA steps into its golden 50th year, it is easy to picture shiny medals and trophies when we think of champions. But being a champion is about so much more than recognition or applause.

Each of us carries a story defined by unique timelines, challenges, and milestones. Some may find themselves reaching their goals quickly, while others take a winding path that unfolds in ways they could never have imagined. Neither journey is better or worse because your timeline is special to you, and it is in walking your own path that you find strength. What truly matters is not the pace of your journey, but the persistence you bring to it.

I think back to the many times my life didn't unfold in the way that I had imagined, and I feel immense gratitude for these moments. Those experiences gave me the resilience to keep going. True championship is not built in the spotlight; it's built in the quiet moments of perseverance, in how we rise after setbacks, and in the energy we invest into overcoming challenges. That energy is what fuels our ability to enact positive change.

We are proud to embrace this spirit through the Fall eMagazine edition titled "*Champions of Resilience*." As the school year begins and new opportunities await, the International Executive Council hopes you appreciate that each of you are already champions of your own story. The way HOSA members show up each day is a testimony to what resilience can accomplish.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ria Mohan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ria Mohan
International President,
HOSA-Future Health Professionals

HOSA WEEK!

Monday, November 3 – Friday, November 7

by Jeet Sridhar, 2025–26 President-Elect

HOSA Week is our time to celebrate everything that makes HOSA—Future Health Professionals extraordinary. Each year, members around the world come together to honor the true heart of HOSA—our members, chapters, and shared journey in healthcare and leadership. Every day features a unique theme, giving everyone the chance to participate, connect, and showcase their HOSA pride. Let's make this milestone 50th HOSA Week one to remember!



November 3: Milestone Monday

HOSA's history runs vast, filled with milestones that have shaped our organization into what it is today. **On this day, chapters and states are encouraged to celebrate HOSA's legacy by sharing alumni throwbacks, historic achievements, or meaningful moments from their own journeys.** Together, let's honor the stories that have contributed to HOSA's impact for the past 50 years!

November 4: Together Tuesday

From big ideas to small acts of kindness, everything is brighter when we do it together! Today is all about celebrating the bonds that make HOSA not just an organization, but a family. **Members can showcase community service projects, team traditions, or the simple joy of working with fellow HOSA members.** Together Tuesday is your chance to shine a spotlight on the connections that turn teamwork into impact!

November 5: Why HOSA Wednesday

Share the personal "WHY" behind joining HOSA. Today is all about our own unique HOSA journeys. **Members are encouraged to highlight the reasons that drew them to HOSA.** Whether it was a passion for healthcare, a welcoming community to be a part of, or the desire to be a change-maker, today is about showcasing what defines each member's journey!

November 6: Talent Thursday

What makes HOSA special is YOU! **This Thursday, let's celebrate the diverse skills and creativity of our HOSA members.** By celebrating these diverse talents, this day reminds us that the strength of HOSA lies in the individuality of its members, while being united in a collective spirit!

November 7: Future Friday

As HOSA celebrates its 50th Anniversary, this Friday turns our focus to the future. **Like any change-maker, we invite everyone to share their vision for the future of HOSA.** Whether through personal goals, chapter aspirations, or innovative ideas, Future Friday is a reminder that the legacy of the past five decades is only the beginning. Remember, the future begins with you!



"HOSA Week has always been a unifying opportunity to allow our students to come together and celebrate what makes HOSA so great. Especially this year, HOSA Week is our chance to honor our legacy of what the past 50 years has done for us."

— Nicholas Hanle, South Carolina HOSA Board Chair-Elect and local advisor

Stay connected by following HOSA—Future Health Professionals on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn at @hosafhp! As you join in the activities, be sure to tag us and use the hashtag #HOSAWeek for a chance to be featured on our platforms and celebrated by HOSA members across the globe!

HOSA takes on the 19th Annual Washington Leadership Academy

by Jeet Sridhar, 2025-26 President-Elect & Ria Mohan, 2025-26 International President

The story of this nation's capital has always been written by those who lead with purpose, and this September, HOSA's finest leaders gathered to do just that. Each year, HOSA-Future Health Professionals brings its enthusiastic members to Washington, D.C. for a weekend of service and connection, and the 19th Annual Washington Leadership Academy (WLA) was no exception. This year's conference brought together representatives from over 40 chartered associations and over 500 officers, local leaders, advisors, and alumni for four transformative days of leadership development and advocacy. Guided by the 2025-2026 international theme, *Champions of Change*, attendees honored HOSA's 50-year legacy while embracing their role in shaping its future by learning, leading, serving, and innovating!

The weekend began with a powerful welcome from Jaysi Ramirez, DC HOSA's State President, who had the special honor of addressing attendees in her home city. Standing before hundreds of students, she drew a poignant parallel between Washington's beloved cherry blossoms and the community that HOSA leaders cultivate together: "Just as the cherry blossoms start off as a bundle of roots, we are here to build deeper roots for our teams—the foundation by which we will work, grow, and build our chapters this year... Together, as Champions of Change, let's plant the seeds of leadership here in D.C. and watch them blossom across the nation."



With that spirit of growth and renewal, attendees dove into a series of interactive leadership workshops led by the International Executive Council (IEC) with each session offering a unique lens on this year's anniversary: past, present, and future.

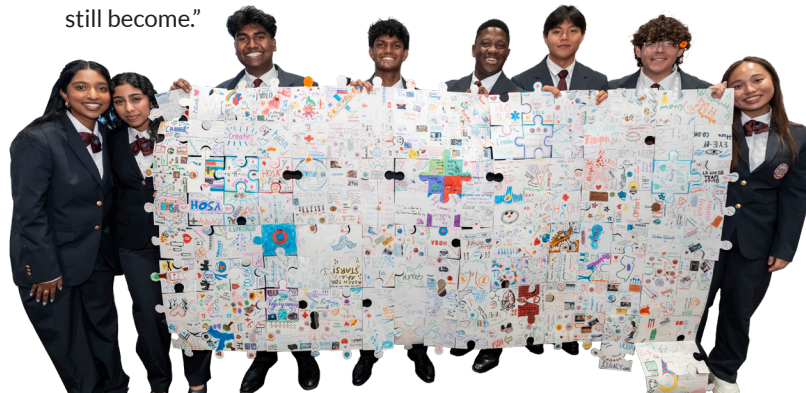


Building on the momentum of how HOSA's history has shaped the last 50 years, the HOSA Alumni Workshop bridged generations of leadership and legacy by showcasing the past. After watching a powerful video interview that showcased the lifetime of a HOSA member, from middle school involvement to words of wisdom from our Chair of the Board of Directors, Dr. David Kelly, attendees envisioned the meaning of one's HOSA journey. Members split into groups to collaboratively design tangible goals and initiatives to strengthen alumni engagement, from mentorship opportunities to chapter support networks.

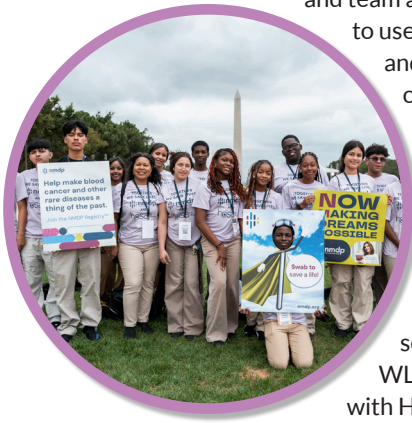
Bringing that reflection into action, the HOSA Quest Log Workshop transformed learning into an adventure by celebrating the present. Part scavenger hunt, part team challenge, it sent members racing to uncover clues about HOSA's history, values, and programs. Laughter echoed as teams strategized, searched, and celebrated small victories along the way. The activity wasn't just about finding answers, it was about rediscovering what unites every HOSA member.



Finally, the 50th Anniversary Workshop invited members to reflect on their personal journeys while envisioning a future for HOSA's next 50 years. Members received a blank puzzle piece and were asked to illustrate their HOSA stories. Soon, the room came alive with color, puzzle pieces covered in doodles, quotes, timelines, and symbols of growth. The completed mosaic of all the connected pieces told a powerful story of how HOSA's 50-year legacy isn't a single image, but a collective one, built from thousands of individual stories that, together, form the organization's foundation. Two-time WLA attendee and Washington HOSA's Region 5 Vice President Isabella Webb shared that it was her favorite session of the weekend, explaining that it "reminded me why I fell in love with HOSA in the first place: the people, the purpose, and the promise of what we can still become."



To tie all sessions together, the IEC was thrilled to welcome Jeff Koeninger & Jennifer McNelly, both of whom are certified CliftonStrengths coaches to help attendees discover and apply their personal strengths in leadership. Through reflection and team activities, members learned how to use their talents to empower others and lead with authenticity. Reflecting on the session, Webb shared that understanding her own strengths made her more confident in how she can contribute to her team's success, adding that "There is no weakness, there are only strengths."



Beyond the leadership sessions, service remained at the heart of WLA through continued collaboration with HOSA's premier service partner, the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP).

Representatives shared powerful stories of hope and healing, reminding attendees of the real-world impact of HOSA's advocacy. Following a hands-on training session, student leaders took to the streets of Washington, D.C., to raise awareness and funds for stem cell and bone marrow donation. In just a few hours, over \$500 was raised and more than 30 new donors joined the national registry—each one representing a potential lifesaving match. Together, members

exemplified HOSA's mission to serve selflessly, proving that small actions can ripple into transformational change.

As night fell over the nation's capital, attendees embarked on a Twilight Tour of Washington's most iconic landmarks. Illuminated by the glow of the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, students reflected on the values of leadership, service, and resilience represented by each site. The tour served as a powerful reminder to every HOSA member that change often begins with visionaries who dare to imagine something better. The following morning, students visited Arlington National Cemetery, a reflective experience that underscored the importance of service and sacrifice. Attendees paid tribute to the countless individuals who dedicated their lives to the well-being of others, drawing parallels between military service and the selflessness required of future healthcare professionals. In a moving moment of remembrance, HOSA's International President, Ria Mohan, and President-Elect, Jeet Sridhar, had the honor of changing the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, representing the gratitude of the entire HOSA community. Many described the experience as a moment of perspective, one that deepened their understanding of what it truly means to serve.



To conclude each WLA, HOSA members eagerly look forward to advocating directly for Career and Technical Education (CTE) on Capitol Hill. Delegations from across the country met with congressional staff to discuss the value of healthcare education and the importance of continued investment in CTE programs. Through these conversations, students discovered the power of their voices in shaping national policy.

When asked what this experience meant to him, Puerto Rico HOSA President Luis Vasquez captured the spirit of the conference perfectly. He reminded attendees that leadership is not about recognition, but about ripple effects, and how one action, one conversation, or one moment of courage can spark change in others. “Be proactive. Don’t just sit and listen—go meet new people, raise your hand, and keep learning from those around you,” he shared. For Vasquez, one of his favorite memories speaks to how the true magic of WLA is community.

He reflected fondly on the IEC-led dance that was choreographed as a fun routine for members to get their bodies moving in between leadership sessions. During these breaks, laughter and heartfelt conversations captured the essence of HOSA that embodies the spirit of WLA.

The success of Washington Leadership Academy 2025 was made possible through the steadfast support of the HOSA-100 National Advisory Council, whose generosity, mentorship,

and vision continue to shape HOSA’s future. As a coalition of distinguished alumni, healthcare professionals, and partners, the council serves as the backbone of HOSA’s leadership experiences. By opening doors, expanding opportunities, and ensuring that programs like WLA empower students to lead with purpose, HOSA-100 members ensure an organization that is member-oriented. During a HOSA-100 meeting, Mohan and Sridhar delivered heartfelt remarks of gratitude and inspiration, sharing how the council’s belief in student leaders fuels transformation that reaches far beyond Washington, D.C. Their words left a lasting impression, echoing HOSA-100’s core message: that the organization’s impact endures because of those who continue to give back and invest in the next generation of health professionals.

With new inspiration fueling their journeys home, HOSA leaders departed Washington, D.C. with a renewed commitment to lead with courage, serve with compassion, and inspire through action. From the inspiring words to the advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, WLA 2025 reminded every participant that being a Champion of Change means leading not only with knowledge, but with heart. As HOSA enters its milestone year, the lessons of WLA 2025 continue to echo across chapters worldwide: change begins with us, and the future of healthcare leadership is brighter than ever.





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AI in Healthcare:

Innovation, Equity, and the Next Generation of Leaders

by David Gonzalez, 2025–26 Secondary Board Representative



Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer something reserved for futuristic labs or science fiction movies; AI is actively transforming healthcare, research, and innovation. From algorithms that help radiologists detect cancer more efficiently, predictive models that flag patients at risk of complications, to virtual assistants that reduce the paperwork that keeps providers away from their patients, AI continues to shape medicine in profound ways.

For HOSA–Future Health Professionals members preparing to enter the medical field, this transformation raises not just the technical question—what can AI do?—but the ethical inquiry: how should we use it? The answers can come from experts driving research, equity scholars shaping access, and HOSA members navigating the transformational change first hand.

AI Enhanced Research

Very few people understand the importance of medical discovery better than Patrik Brundin, MD, PhD. A leading neuroscientist, Brundin trained as a physician in Sweden before turning to research. Today, as a Distinguished Scientist and Therapeutic Area Leader for Movement Disorders at Roche, Brundin oversees some of the most cutting-edge efforts to treat neurological diseases like Parkinson's and Huntington's. His career allowed him to experience the reality of patient care, and the innovative process of medical research. This dual lens has allowed him to become particularly attuned to artificial intelligence's impact on both fields.

"AI today is a huge time saver," Brundin said. "It allows researchers to analyze data sets, evaluate proposals, and even read thousands of scientific articles in a fraction of the time it would normally take."

At Roche, Brundin and his team use specialized AI systems to simulate drug-receptor interactions and predict protein structures—tasks that once consumed vast budgets and years of work. Now, AI compresses those efforts into weeks or months, accelerating the pace of discovery and opening the door to treatments patients might otherwise never see.

"AI can help provide a preliminary diagnosis for those bigger decisions," he explained. Doctors, he insists, will always remain at the center of care, but AI can serve as a trusted assistant that synthesizes information and helps avoid mistakes. In some ways, AI could even exhibit "less bias than some doctors," Brundin stated.

Brundin also noted that AI technology is not infallible. It relies on its training data, and biased data creates biased outcomes, which in medicine could mean unequal treatment. Because of this, Roche and other organizations have placed an emphasis on AI training programs for researchers.

During his own experiments, Brundin once asked an AI system to find articles that connected Alzheimer's disease and type 2 diabetes from credible researchers and international journals. The AI responded with what appeared to be citations from reputable sources.

"Everything looked credible, but when I checked, the articles didn't exist," Brundin recalled. "The AI had fabricated them, even the digital object identifiers were fake."

AI can "hallucinate," producing false information in a convincing format. This is why, Brundin stresses, future clinicians and researchers must always review AI outputs critically, verifying sources and ensuring conclusions make sense. At its best, AI can expand capacity and accelerate discovery, but only if paired with the judgement, oversight, and ethical responsibility of human professionals.

AI Enhanced Communication

For future healthcare professionals, understanding how technology intersects with representation and access is essential. For Avery Shaver, a HOSA member at Baylor University who is hard of hearing, this isn't theoretical.

Shaver has seen firsthand how people often struggle to communicate effectively with those who think differently. "People do not fully understand how to truly talk to [those with disabilities]," she said.

She said she believes AI has enormous potential to close those gaps. Tools like transcription services, closed-caption programs, and even picture-based communication systems can help patients better understand their care.

"For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, being in conferences can be difficult. AI technologies can provide closed captions and subtitles with programs that can provide better communication and understanding," she explained.

Shaver hopes to pursue medical school and ultimately become a neonatologist. She sees technology as part of her future practice. "Technology will always play a part in healthcare. I hope that inclusivity technology can help us better communicate with patients," Shaver said.

As the next generation of healthcare leaders, HOSA members carry the responsibility of ensuring AI is implemented ethically, inclusively, and with compassion. Technology will continue to evolve, but values such as empathy, service, and equity remain constant. HOSA members can help ensure that artificial intelligence becomes not only a technological breakthrough, but also a force for compassion and fairness in medicine.



"Technology will always play a part in healthcare. I hope that inclusivity technology can help us better communicate with patients."

—Avery Shaver

Not Your Average Middle Schooler: Edward Lee

by **Matthew Kim**, 2025-26 Western Region Vice President



When most students think about middle school, they envision spending time with friends, playing games, or simply having fun. For Lee, an eighth grader at Oxford Academy, middle school has meant the start of his future goals. Now in his second year of HOSA—Future Health Professionals and currently serving as a middle school representative for his local chapter’s HOSA Board, Lee has already begun finding his place as a future healthcare professional.

Lee’s journey started when he was inspired by the people closest to him, but especially by his mother, who is a registered nurse. “I’m motivated to be a part of HOSA because of my passion for the medical field. More than that, I am inspired because my mom is a nurse who constantly helps her patients,” Lee said. He recalls seeing his mother come home after long hours at work, yet still care for their family with a smile on her face. Her compassionate example motivates Lee to give back in similar ways.

What makes Lee different is how he views the opportunities that HOSA provides for him. “The students who were older than me were achievers and fulfilled leadership roles, and I really wanted to be like them,” he reflected.

According to him, joining HOSA has been one of the most rewarding decisions he has ever made. He credits the organization for its numerous networking opportunities and the

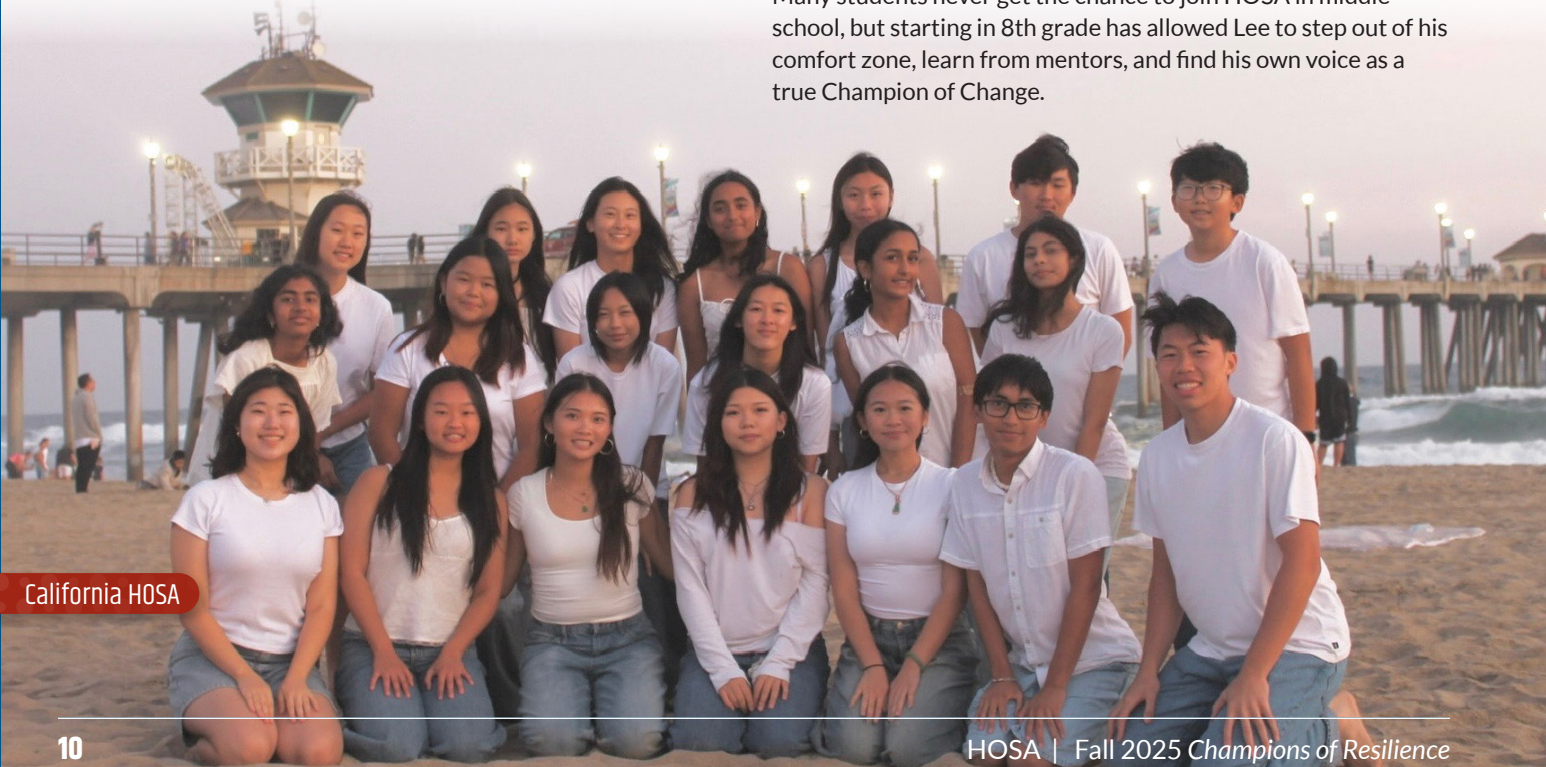
wealth of knowledge he has gained. He views HOSA as more than a résumé line, but rather “a family that helps each other become the best versions of themselves,” Lee said.

As a Middle School Board member, Lee is focused on leaving his mark by making HOSA more visible and welcoming on his campus. He’s already taken on the challenge of reaching out to students during their club rush. Although he may be one of the youngest, he isn’t afraid to share his story to encourage others to join HOSA.

“I want HOSA to be something everyone knows about, and I want students to realize how amazing an opportunity it can be,” he shared. Whether it’s spending a few extra seconds to connect with first-time members at meetings or brainstorming ways to showcase HOSA at events, Lee leads with intention.

Lee said he sees the next five years in HOSA as an opportunity to “become a better leader for the people around [him].” He hopes to learn from those who have more experience than him so that one day, he can share his own knowledge with others.

Many students never get the chance to join HOSA in middle school, but starting in 8th grade has allowed Lee to step out of his comfort zone, learn from mentors, and find his own voice as a true Champion of Change.



California HOSA

From Indiana to the Nation's Health: Dr. Jerome Adams and the Leaders He Inspired

by Gowthamm Mandala,
2025–26 Post Secondary/Collegiate
Board Representative



Jerome M. Adams, MD, MPH, began his path to becoming the 20th U.S. Surgeon General on a small farm in Maryland. Growing up, he learned resilience and service from daily life on the land—values that later shaped his approach to healthcare.

An outstanding student, Adams earned degrees in biochemistry, biopsychology, medicine, and public health. His career consistently blended clinical care with public health leadership. In Indiana, he served as State Health Commissioner before being appointed U.S. Surgeon General in 2017, where he confronted some of the nation's most pressing challenges, including the opioid epidemic, HIV outbreaks, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although Adams was not a HOSA member, his connection to the organization came into focus at the 2025 Indiana HOSA State Leadership

Conference in Indianapolis.

Speaking to a full room of students, he emphasized that leadership does not

begin with a title. It begins with daily choices to serve, to communicate, and to include others.

The message resonated deeply with a chartered association preparing to welcome the world to Indianapolis for HOSA's 50th anniversary International Leadership Conference in June 2026.

For Indiana HOSA President Yonathan Bezza, the keynote was a moment he did not expect. "It surprised me to see someone of his stature take the time to speak directly to students," he said. "There were moments in his speech where the room went completely silent because of the passion behind his words."

That silence carried weight for him.

He left the conference determined to strengthen systems for service, so that participation becomes easier for every member.

For Indiana HOSA President-Elect Ananya Yemme, the theme of equity stood out. "Many of our conferences are concentrated in central Indiana, which can leave other chapters feeling less connected," she explained. "One of my priorities is to reach out more to chapters across the state so every member feels represented and included."



Both officers pointed to Adams' communication as another lesson. "The way he paused, the energy he had, and the enthusiasm behind his words all made an impact on me," Bezza said. "I want to bring that same style into workshop settings, asking questions that keep people focused and involved."

Yemme linked the keynote to her own HOSA journey. Events such as Health Education and Public Service Announcement had already shown her the importance of teamwork and coordination. "Communicating constantly during competitions and busy schedules was the key to success," she said. "Those skills now translate into working closely with officers and members."

Reflection also surfaced as an important theme. Bezza said that leading an impromptu speaking workshop revealed the importance of adapting in real time while also inviting feedback.

"Leadership isn't flawless," he said. "It's about learning in the moment and making sure communication flows both ways."

Service was another lesson they carried forward. Yemme described how her understanding of service changed when she volunteered alongside partners instead of only donating to them. "Donating supplies is helpful, but it doesn't always create connections," she said. "Working with organizations like Sewa International and Fueled for Schools created stronger bonds and made the experience meaningful for both sides."

Adams' keynote, combined with his career path, reframed leadership for both officers. His message was straightforward and demanding. Leadership is not a title you hold. It is a responsibility you practice. It shows up in the systems you build, the clarity you provide, and the people you lift.

Yemme offered a similar perspective. "Stewardship is planning so others can participate," she said. "When access is built into planning from the beginning, more students feel included and more communities feel supported. That is when leadership becomes real."

Both officers also directed a message toward new members. Yemme encouraged students to seek out connection. Bezza echoed the same sentiment. "It only takes one conversation," Bezza said. "That initial connection can spark a chain reaction that keeps you involved and motivated."

Adams' journey, paired with the reflections of Bezza and Yemme, illustrates a continuum of leadership in action. From farm life in Maryland to the office of the U.S. Surgeon General, and from a keynote stage in Indiana to student leaders preparing to serve thousands, the lesson is clear: Leadership is built in the present. For HOSA members everywhere, the skills and passions they practice today are already opening doors to the future of healthcare.



"It surprised me to see someone of his stature take the time to speak directly to students."

—Yonathan Bezza, Indiana HOSA President



"Many of our conferences are concentrated in central Indiana, which can leave other chapters feeling less connected. One of my priorities is to reach out more to chapters across the state so every member feels represented and included."

—Ananya Yemme, Indiana HOSA President-Elect



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Living Out the HOSA Triangle, Part One of Three: Physical Wellness at Its Core

by Jeet Sridhar, 2025–26 President-Elect



At the heart of HOSA—Future Health Professionals’ emblem is a simple truth: your well-being matters. The emblem’s most recognizable feature, the triangle, represents the three essential aspects of human health: physical, mental, and social. Each side of the triangle reminds members that true wellness is not one-dimensional but built on the balance of body, mind, and community. Since HOSA’s founding in 1976, this symbol has served as a guide for future health professionals, reinforcing that the journey to caring for others begins with caring for ourselves.

With the hustle and bustle of daily life, it can be easy for our HOSA members to overlook their well-being. Yet, one of the building blocks of good health is our physical wellness. The following stories from fellow members spotlight how small, intentional choices can make a big difference, serving as reminders that we can all reignite our commitment to wellness or find new ways to relate to it.



For Rohit Lobo, a 2024–2025 Pennsylvania HOSA state officer, athletics was central to his ability to manage the demands of school and leadership. As a volleyball player, he experienced firsthand how physical health shaped his mindset.

“Taking care of my physical health helps me stay more focused and less stressed. When I get good sleep and workouts in, I’m definitely more calm and can handle school or leadership responsibilities without feeling as overwhelmed,” Lobo said. “Staying active gave me motivation and honestly more energy. I was more ready to do my work, and the physical activity made me feel sharper whenever I studied,”



Even during busy seasons, practices boosted his productivity rather than detracting from it. He found that consistency in his training not only improved his performance on the court but also taught him discipline that carried over to his leadership. He said physical health is not only fitness but also a foundation for a healthy life.

His advice for peers is simple: find time to move, no matter how small. “Even short walks can pay off by refreshing your mind for whatever work you have,” he shared.

At South Forsyth High School (SFHS) in Georgia, a team of members explored the intersection of wellness and leadership through their Mental Health Promotion project, winning first place at the 2025 International Leadership Conference. In it,



they made it clear that their success was rooted in physical wellness, serving as their anchor for mental clarity and giving them the platform to spread that message through a social media campaign. The initiative was led by seniors Ronak Mohanty, Shruti Medicherla, Saanvi Naredla, Shrina Jyoti, and Eesha Kandula.

Mohanty shared that sports became an anchor during challenging times. "Statistics show that summer is often linked to mental health struggles, and many students get isolated due to the ample amount of time and freedom," he explained. "Having a sport like tennis or pickleball gives us purpose and mental clarity rather than staying stagnant."

For Kandula, physical wellness offered both discipline and belonging. "You have to be confident. Enveloping yourself in the sport ensures you have a purpose. But beyond the physical activity, it's about the community it creates," Kandula said.

At its core, physical wellness is inseparable from mental health. For HOSA members, this connection is especially important. Leadership and service can be demanding, and caring for the body is often the first step toward caring for the mind. When physical wellness becomes a habit, it can create the clarity needed to better equip our students to handle their daily challenges and endeavors.

As the members of the SFHS Mental Health Promotion team reminded us: "Those small successes add up to big impact." By choosing wellness, you are choosing to honor yourself, and that choice empowers you to show up stronger for the people and communities who need you most.



Beyond the White Coat:

Dr. Ian Black's Journey to Mentorship and Discovery

by **Shriya Kunam**, 2025–26 International Eastern Region Vice President

When we think of healthcare, our minds often go straight to the white coat: a physician in a clinic, a surgeon in the Operating Room (OR), or a researcher at the bench. While those images are true, some of the most meaningful moments of leadership in healthcare happen in places we do not always expect. They happen when a nurse in a juvenile detention center chooses to care for patients others might overlook, when a medical student turns a late-night brainstorm into a health-tech app that expands access to care, or when a paramedic draws on frontline experience to prepare entire communities for disaster.

These stories remind us that healthcare leadership is broad and multi-dimensional. The people behind this work are not just preparing for the future of healthcare, they are shaping it now. And in doing so, they show us that leadership is not about the coat you wear, but about the change you are willing to create.

At the University of Georgia's Complex Carbohydrate Research Center (CCRC), one of those leaders is Ian Black, PhD. His work focuses on some of the most fundamental, yet often overlooked, building blocks of life: carbohydrates.

"My work mainly involves polysaccharide analysis, but our lab analyzes carbohydrates from many different sources," he explained. "We even take on projects outside of carbohydrates, because the equipment here allows us to support a wide range of scientific questions."



What excites him most, however, is not only the science itself but also the opportunity to make that science accessible. The CCRC is developing programs that allow high school and undergraduate students to step into the lab and experience research in action. "Even if it's just for a week," Black said, "students can get a sense of what science really looks like, the instruments, the techniques, the process. That kind of exposure is rare in most curriculums."

The CCRC serves as a bridge between discovery and application, offering expertise that can shape treatments, agriculture, and nutrition. Black recalled a project in which the lab partnered with a physician treating a patient with a rare genetic disease. "The doctor didn't have access to the specialized equipment needed to measure a particular carbohydrate-based molecule,"



he explained. "We were able to analyze patient samples and provide data on how the carbohydrates of interest were changing with treatment. It becomes a team effort."



Black's impact extends beyond his research, and he shared he believes mentorship is just as important. By working with high schoolers and undergraduates, Black can highlight an area of science they may not encounter in their classes. His goal is to spark curiosity and show them that this field matters. Looking to the future, Black sees education as the foundation for progress. While carbohydrate research already plays a role in medicine and public health, he believes its greatest growth will come from expanding the number of students who engage with it.

"If we can put more students on the path toward science, whether in carbohydrates or other fields, we push the boundaries forward," he said. "That's how discoveries happen."

For students in HOSA, his advice is clear: do not see science and medicine as separate tracks. "We've had a lot of success with people who come in wanting to be medical professionals but also have a positive experience in the lab," Black said. "Sometimes that encourages them to consider paths like the MD-PhD, where they don't have to choose between medicine and research. The best outcome is when students embrace both."

The white coat may symbolize healthcare, but it does not define it. For HOSA members, that means paths do not have to look the same to make an impact. The future of healthcare is not waiting behind clinic walls. It is being built right now in minds, laboratories, communities, and acts of courage – both big and small. And it is through those very acts that HOSA members embody what it means to be Champions of Change, driving progress, breaking boundaries, and redefining the future of care.

The Power of Resilience: Allison Massari's Message for HOSA's Next Generation Beyond the Stage

by **Ria Mohan**, 2025–26 International President



AS HOSA–Future Health Professionals looks toward the milestone of its 50th Anniversary at the 2026 International Leadership Conference in Indianapolis, members are also reflecting on the legacy of moments that shaped the path to this celebration. One of those moments came in June 2025, when keynote speaker Allison Massari stood on stage at the International Leadership Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and shared a story that reached far beyond the walls of the convention hall.

Massari's journey is one marked by resilience, courage, and a refusal to be defined by tragedy. The daughter of a nurse and a surgeon, she grew up surrounded by the values of medicine, compassion, kindness, and hard work. But years later, those values would become deeply personal when she survived not one but two life-threatening car accidents. Severely burned and faced with injuries that reshaped every corner of her life, Massari found herself relying on the very humanity and empathy of healthcare teams to begin again.

"Family was huge for me," she reflected. "My mother and father were my anchors. Not everyone has that, and I'm very aware of that. But their example...the humility they carried, the excellence they lived with, their history of coming from an enthusiastic work ethic, and creating a life of possibility, gave me a foundation. I didn't want to feel like a victim. I wanted my life to feel powerful, equal, and engaged."

This drive to not be defined by hardship became Massari's compass. She said she leaned on her spiritual grounding, her Italian heritage of hard work, and a philosophy of personal responsibility and always seeking to find the good in life—no matter what. That mindset carried her through pain, therapy, and the often invisible battles of recovery, reminding her that effort, small or large, was a path forward.

Massari's story is not only about grit, but also, at its heart, it's about compassion. After one accident left her with an undiagnosed brain injury, she recalls repeatedly being told, "oh, you'll be fine." Until one doctor looked at her differently when she described how she was struggling.

"He looked at me like I was his daughter," she shared. "He said, 'Let's order you an MRI and take a look.' That compassion changed everything and he personally made calls that got me into a leading rehab center where I began to recover."

For Massari, empathy became a force that reshaped not just her recovery, but her vision of leadership and care. "It was the occupational therapists and physical therapists who closely looked after me and thought creatively outside the box. Their open-mindedness,

their willingness to live in the gray rather than black and white, gave me my life back. That's what courage looks like in healthcare."

It is this lived experience that makes her message resonate so deeply with HOSA members preparing to become the next generation of healthcare leaders. She defines true leadership as "heart-led." In her words: "There's nothing more important than heart-led anything, especially heart-led leadership. If you have that at the forefront, everything comes together. People underestimate the power of the heart. It solves problems before they even come up. And when you restore and care for yourself first, that ripples out. People feel your peace, your love, your presence."

Her advice for young leaders balancing ambition with humility is simple but profound: "Ambition and humility can coexist side by side. You can hustle hard and still be humble. The key is to keep your heart at the center," Massari said.

Her message to her younger self, and to any HOSA member standing on the edge of a challenge, is one of reassurance. She shared, "I would tell myself— It's all going to be okay. Everything you need is already inside of you." As HOSA celebrates its upcoming 50th anniversary, Massari's story reminds members that the legacy they inherit and the legacy they create will not be defined by perfection, but by presence and heart-led choices that see people in their wholeness. Her courage is not just an individual triumph; it's an invitation for HOSA members to find their own, and to choose resilience, empathy, and above all, heart.



"Ambition and humility can coexist side by side. You can hustle hard and still be humble. The key is to keep your heart at the center."

—Allison Massari





What Is POP?

The coolest career you've never heard of

By: The American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics

What Is POP?

Prosthetic, orthotic and pedorthic (POP) devices help individuals move better. POP professionals design, shape and fit state-of-the-art braces, artificial limbs and footwear to improve movement for individuals with limb loss, limb difference or mobility issues. From helping children and people with diabetes, to veterans and Paralympians, POP professionals improve the lives of millions.

How do POP professionals build POP devices?

A career as a POP professional means making a meaningful difference from day one. POP professionals use a variety of techniques, tools and materials, and work directly with patients to improve their mobility, independence and quality of life. It's a chance to build connections and provide wide-ranging and ongoing support for patients of all ages and abilities.

What are some of the pathways to POP?

POP careers combine elements of health, science and engineering with art, resulting in an exciting and rewarding profession.

POP professionals are vital members of healthcare teams and work directly with patients, doctors and other care providers. Careers in POP range widely from healthcare providers to device creators, and there are options for people with high school, college and graduate degrees. Every role—prosthetists, orthotists, pedorthists, assistants, technicians and fitters, among many more—helps make a difference in the lives of individuals who need POP devices.

POP careers rank among the best healthcare jobs in the United States, with employment in the field expected to increase 17% in the next decade.

Is POP a good fit for me?

A POP career is a great fit for students who like problem solving. Working in POP is a chance to use a variety of skills and knowledge, ranging from math and science to technology and art. No matter your interests, there's a perfect fit for everyone.

WhatIsPOP, a career awareness initiative from the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, was created to help students find their pathway to POP. Visit WhatIsPOP.org to learn more about POP career opportunities and connect with professionals who love what they do.

Some examples of POP careers include:

Prosthetist

Prosthetists create and custom-fit artificial limbs for people with limb loss or limb difference.

Orthotist

Orthotists create and fit braces that increase mobility and treat many different conditions.

Pedorthist

Pedorthists create and fit devices to treat painful or disabling foot conditions.

Champions of Change: HOSA Alumni Spotlight on Parliamentary Leadership

by Aaron Summerall, 2025-26 Central Region Vice President



Kamala Allen,
AL HOSA



Fashika Williams,
TX HOSA

When HOSA members step into HOSA's Parliamentary Procedure Competitive Event, they often see it as a test of motions, rules, and precision. For many, however, it becomes the start of something much bigger: a foundation for careers, leadership, and service that last well beyond the current moment.

That legacy was on full display at the 45th Biennial National Association of Parliamentarians (NAP) Convention, where HOSA alumni turned Professional Registered Parliamentarians (PRPs) shared how their journeys began in our organization. Their stories remind us that the lessons of preparation, fairness, and order not only shape competitions but also fuel lifelong success.

In the 1980s, Kamala Allen joined HOSA at John Herbert Phillips High School in Birmingham, Alabama. Drawn to healthcare, she recalls the thrill of learning how to take a blood pressure reading. HOSA gave her early exposure to communication, confidence, and leadership opportunities.

Today, Allen serves as Senior Vice President for Program and Strategic Planning at the Center for Health Care Strategies. She credits parliamentary knowledge for reinforcing her leadership; ensuring every team member has a voice, setting clear expectations, and guiding groups toward consensus. Her passion for maternal and child health, first sparked in HOSA, remains central to her career.

Meeting HOSA's current International Central Region Vice President, Aaron Summerall, at NAP inspired her to reconnect. "I had not reflected on my time in HOSA in many years, and I am eager to reconnect as an alum," she shared.

In Dallas, Texas, Fashika Willis McClelland found her start in HOSA at Townview Magnet High School for Health Professions. As a member, she competed in HOSA Bowl, Medical Technology, and Parliamentary Procedure.

"HOSA was one of the first places where I learned how to step into leadership with confidence," McClelland reflected. "The thrill of working together under pressure, and realizing we could rise to the challenge, was unforgettable."

Those lessons have carried forward for over 25 years. Now known as "The People's Parliamentarian™," McClelland has presided in local, state, and national roles, built a consulting business, and trained leaders across organizations. Her message is simple — parliamentary procedure is about fairness, respect, and efficiency. Those principles are just as vital in classrooms, boardrooms, and legislatures as they are in competitions.

Alumni like Allen and McClelland prove that what starts as a competition event can evolve into a calling of guiding organizations with structure, equity, and purpose. Parliamentary law in practice becomes a superpower that protects fairness, builds trust, and empowers leaders to become true champions of change.

Fall Leadership Conferences: From Coast to Coast

by Megan Lloren, 2025–26 Post-Secondary Collegiate Vice President

From the sunny beaches of California to the palmetto-lined streets of South Carolina, chartered associations across the country have come together to kick off the HOSA year with Fall Leadership Conferences (FLCs). Each conference not only represents a celebration of leadership and service, but also serves as an incubator of growth for local leaders to connect with their state officers and gain valuable insight that they can bring back to their chapters.



California HOSA

“Despite being only one out of two locations [FLC] in Region 4, we had 20 plus chapters attend and over 400 members participate. We also launched our Golden Hearts Initiative in honor of California HOSA’s 40th anniversary to create an opportunity for chapters to build connections with local hospitals and serve their community by creating kits for pediatric patients or visitors. It left me inspired and truly grateful for this opportunity to learn, lead, serve, and innovate as a student leader and future health professional.

— **Claire Kim**, California HOSA State Vice President

“I loved connecting with our middle and secondary school members in these workshops and getting to know them on a deeper level. Their passion for their local chapters is so motivating to see. Seeing our members take the initiative to teach various health topics and share their stories reminds me of my own purpose and drive in HOSA – to lead for others. I’m so grateful for the amazing experience, and I’m excited to see what’s next.”

— **Annie Gao**, California HOSA State Secretary



Iowa HOSA

“This past month, I had the privilege of leading alongside my team at the largest FLC Iowa HOSA has ever hosted. With 150 percent more attendees than last year, I loved being able to connect with members from across the state and hear what they’re passionate about in this amazing organization. The experience left me proud, inspired, and honored to serve as a leader in HOSA-FHP.”

— **Adithi Jenigiri**, Iowa HOSA President Elect



Missouri HOSA

"From watching members eagerly participate in discussions to seeing them connect with others who share the same purpose, I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of pride in what our generation is capable of. The energy and unity throughout the conference was unforgettable. Every conversation, activity, and shared moment reflected the drive and heart that define Missouri (MO) HOSA. MO HOSA isn't just preparing future health professionals: we're shaping changemakers who are ready to serve, lead, and transform the world."

— Wyatt McDonald, Missouri HOSA President



District of Columbia HOSA

"At DC HOSA's 2025 FLC, I had the incredible opportunity to forge meaningful connections with local officer leaders from around Washington, D.C. Members spent the day participating in interactive workshops hosted by the SEC (state executive council). Whether it was a red carpet walk with unique HOSA-themed shirts or a one-minute 'What HOSA means to me' speech, the connections and skills built at DC HOSA FLC 2025 will be long-lasting."

— Christina Wilson, District of Columbia HOSA Historian



South Carolina HOSA

"Seeing members from all over South Carolina (SC) come together with so much enthusiasm and leadership potential reminded me why I'm proud to serve as a state officer. One of my favorite parts was when members brought toys and gifts for our State Service Project supporting Shriners Children's Hospital. Watching everyone contribute to such a meaningful cause showed the compassion, unity, and generosity that define SC HOSA."

— Himi Patel, South Carolina HOSA Community and Membership Liaison

Blaze Trails & Champion Change

As FLC season continues, we hope these reflections from across the regions inspire you to make the most of your own conference experience. Whether in the West, Midwest, or throughout the East Coast, Fall Leadership Conferences embody the same commitment to HOSA's mission: to empower future health professionals in the global health community, training the next generation to be trailblazers and championing the change that they want to see in the world.

Turning Passion into Purpose: Finding Your Career Path in Healthcare and Beyond

by **Diana L. Dabdub, CAE**

Senior Director for Admissions & Recruitment Affairs,
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

Do you love animals? Helping people? Solving problems? What excites you most, your passions, can help guide you toward a career in healthcare and beyond.

Consider what makes you happy every day. What activities bring a smile to your face or give you energy? Choosing a career does not have to be about how much money you earn. It should connect with what excites and motivates you.

Passion is the desire to learn, grow, and contribute, even when things get tough. It is about doing something that matters to you. It reflects your interests and values.

How to Match Passion with Career

Explore your interests. Take career or personality quizzes, keep a journal, or try new projects (like HOSA competitions!).

Shadow and observe. Ask to shadow professionals or attend career fairs and workshops to see what inspires you.

Build skills. Practice teamwork, communication, and leadership through school clubs, sports, or volunteering.

Ask questions. Talk to people about your interests, such as teachers, advisors, or mentors, who can help guide your journey.

Stay open-minded. It's okay if your interests change over time. Sometimes the journey to finding out what you like is figuring out what you don't like.

vetmed pathways Explore VetMed Pathways
A great resource is VetMed Pathways, an initiative of the **American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)**.

This initiative aims to illuminate all the possibilities within veterinary medicine by supporting students from all backgrounds in exploring careers in veterinary medicine. visit the VetMed Pathways website, vetmedpathways.com, which offers tools, stories, and games that let you explore all kinds of careers in veterinary medicine.

Veterinary medicine isn't just about pets; it's an expansive career that includes public health, research, food safety, and global health. A passion for animals and science can lead to a meaningful career that can make a difference worldwide.



Participate in the a Veterinary Science Competitive Event



Meet Stefanie Contreras – Turning Passion into Purpose

Stefanie Contreras is a DVM Candidate c/o 2026 at the University of Arizona. She is combining her passion with purpose as she pursues a career in veterinary medicine.

"My passion for veterinary medicine began growing up in Laredo, a border community in South Texas, where I saw firsthand the challenges underserved areas face when it comes to accessible pet care. I was always drawn to the human-animal bond and the impact animals have on families, which motivated me to pursue veterinary medicine. As I progressed through my education, I discovered a deep passion for shelter medicine because it combines animal welfare, community service, and public health. I want to focus on creating sustainable programs that expand access to care for both pets and their owners, particularly in under-resourced communities. Through initiatives like trap-neuter-return clinics and community outreach, I hope to reduce pet overpopulation, strengthen the human-animal bond, and support shelters in becoming safe, healing spaces. Ultimately, I see veterinary medicine not just as a career, but as a way to serve both animals and the people who love them."

What Can You Do Now?

Even in middle or high school, you can start small:

- Join chapters or explore leadership opportunities through HOSA.
- Participate in the Veterinary Science Competitive Event (or other health profession competition) to learn more.
- Volunteer with community organizations.
- Explore what subjects you enjoy most (i.e., science, math, communication, or even art).
- Try job shadowing or career exploration programs.
- Visit VetMed Pathways to learn more about veterinary medicine.

Remember — your journey starts with passion. Let your passion guide you toward a fulfilling future in healthcare or veterinary medicine that can make a real impact.

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