

Changemaker Essay

As a child, I liked to help my mom in the garden. I was fascinated by the plants, and how they were fed by water and sunlight. My favorite thing about the garden was catching the beetles with a mason jar: I kept them as pets. In 2006 at the end of my third grade year, my family moved from Deer Park to Spokane. With the move came a new school, Northwest Christian (NWC). I made some good friends my first year at NWC. One of my new best friends, Joey, had been dealing with a bad brain tumor his whole life. It wasn't serious back then, but it was a constant presence in his life. As I progressed through fifth, sixth, and seventh grades at NWC, Joey's brain tumor was persistent.

Towards the end of seventh grade, Joey's brain tumor came back. He was admitted to Sacred Heart Hospital for brain surgery. While at Sacred Heart, his parents decided they wanted him to be seen by a specialist, and flew him to Seattle's Children's Hospital. The surgery was mostly successful; the cancer was removed, but he came out of surgery with the left side of his face paralyzed. I felt terrible for him, so to show my support as a friend, I shaved my head, then my mom and I drove to Seattle for a week to visit him.

When we arrived at Seattle Children's, the first thing I noticed was how large it was. It was like being inside of a mall. As lively and brightening as the place was, I didn't notice very many plants in the hallways or in rooms I glanced into. In my previous experience of going to hospitals, there were usually plants around every corner or some type of aquaponic system. During that week, I often visited the outdoor garden at the hospital. I found it quite peaceful and ataractic.

This memory of visiting my friend in the hospital brought me to the idea of a self sustainable hydroponic system. I realize that sounds a little odd, I mean, what does a hydroponic system have to do with hospitals? I would like to put hydroponic systems in hospitals to showcase the beauty of it, as a refreshing thing to brighten patients' days, and also to show people self sustainability is important. It would also give patients a healthy reminder they can still believe in themselves, and they can still live through whatever condition they have.

Not only is hydroponics good for the environment, it is also good for your mental state of mind. A study was conducted in 1984 by a one Roger Ulrich. Ulrich was the first to use the standards of modern medical research, which had strict experimental controls and assessed health outcomes, to determine that observing a garden can sometimes speed up healing from a surgery, sickness, and improve your mental state. When patients are inside all day, staring at their walls, that stress can affect their healing process. That is why I would like to put hydroponic systems in hospitals.

Normally, the general public does not want to hear about bad or discouraging news. They want to hear uplifting things, things that make them feel good or safe. That's why I feel good about showcasing my idea to the public. Not only will the general public like the idea of it, but also Social Innovators. Hydroponics fit into the bigger picture of life because of its self-sustaining aspect. If you started growing your own food and plants instead of buying them, not only would you be making a difference in your life, but also the life of others. If other people see me growing my own sustainable food, and saving money at the same time, it could lead to a big impact in their life.

So why do we need to raise awareness about hydroponics? Raising awareness about this small self-sustained garden has beneficial factors not only to you, but also to the environment. Hydroponics uses less water than a regular outdoor garden. In a typical soil garden, a lot of the water that gets poured in is lost in the soil, wasting some water. With a hydroponic system, the water is recycled. Hydroponics also reduces land erosion because the system itself requires no soil, therefore it makes no significant changes to land. Also, the closed, controlled environment could eliminate many of the pesticides used to keep bugs from typical crops. This means less poison on the food you and I eat. Hydroponics benefits both you and the environment.

How can we bring hydroponics into hospitals? I would like to start by donating systems to hospitals. Having a soothing garden system for patients to look at instead of their blank rooms would be wonderful. I know from experience that sitting a room with only walls to look at is very depressing, and I wasn't even the patient. Imagine the patients experience. With whatever condition they have, I would imagine that it would be dreadful to gaze at a wall every day. It would be more desirable to having a soothing garden to look at.

According to my friend joey, and other hospital patients, having a small, relaxing hydroponic system in their room would make experience less stressful and more enjoyable. Soothing gardens or gardening systems, (hydroponics), can relieve patients mental state, and stress. Raising awareness to hydroponics is essential to the environment because the public needs to know that this way of gardening is much better than the traditional way. More water is recycled, there would be less land erosion, fewer pesticides on your food, and I could go on. Who wouldn't want their food less poisonous, or the environment to be healthier? It is essential that hydroponic gardening comes out from the dark, so people can see the beauty and beneficial nature of it.