



# What HOSA has taught me so far...

By Tamira Cole, Tennessee HOSA Alumna

The year was 2001. There I sat with fellow HOSA members from South Side High School with sweaty palms and a dry mouth. We had campaigned, shook hands, begged, pleaded all for me to become the 2001-2002 West TN Vice President. "Good luck Tamira," said Brandi. I took one deep breath and prayed.

"And your new 2001-2002 TAHOSA West Tennessee Vice President is.....Sini Kwaube." Immediately, a bucket of tears hit my face and navy blue blazer. HOSA members from Dresden reached for me for a painful hug. Sixteen candidates for eight positions was tough. However, it wasn't the office that truly mattered, but the opportunity to grow as a health professional and leader. Each us was truly indebted to HOSA. I congratulated all of the new officers and sat in my seat with a tear ridden face. I was both a good winner and loser, but for some reason this one stung more than anything.

At that moment I learned one of my first initial life and HOSA lessons: it's not the journey's END but the JOURNEY that counts. I went from a nervous 16 year old to one who handled grace and defeat under fire. As I sat and listened to the guest speaker, Beth Hood, a former Miss Tennessee USA and America, I realized that the journey was not over. Beth, a TAHOSA alumna also ran for state office and lost. I thought to myself, "Wow, she's about to compete for Miss America and she lost!" As I listened to Beth speak my eyes and mind began to clear.

HOSA provides its members with the opportunities to not only compete in dozens of competitions such as extemporaneous speaking and biomedical debate, leadership roles, community service, but for life growth. HOSA allows its members to grow from year to year not only as a competitor, but as a professional. It was in that very seat in Chattanooga, TN that I stopped looking at the END RESULT, but what HOSA offered. I had already won. I won the battle of obstacles, courage and self-confidence to render service to an organization that truly brought my potential to the next level. My advisor, Betty Roberson, and chapter members had been a constant support of that potential. The questions were, how was I going to learn and take from this experience? What was I going to give HOSA WITHOUT being a state officer?

Two months had passed, as the State Barbara James Service Winner I had the opportunity to attend the NLC in Atlanta, GA. It was there during the opening ceremonies that Rebecca Armen, National HOSA President and Deborah Veach, National Secondary Board member (from Tennessee) had empowered me. Seeing such accomplished HOSA members speak proudly on behalf of a life changing organization, gave me confidence that just maybe, just maybe my journey's end was becoming a National HOSA Officer! The NLC was exciting. I met dozens of friends from across the country, received pointers on how to improve my speaking skills (I was 5th in extemporaneous speaking in TN), received ideas for the chapter newsletter and community service, and talked to several national officers. One thing was for sure I was going to run for National Office!

Time passed and I worked closely with then state advisor, Lauren Mclemore and chapter members. I went to state HOSA camp, studied two hours a day with my mother, memorized my speech, edited my résumé and had my official HOSA uniform tailored. For half of my

senior year I spent time giving 150% to HOSA as chapter president. We held bake sales; blood drives, held competition practices after school and made sure that class time was invaluable. Finally, my chapter attended the SLC. Our newsletter took third place! I had to compete to run for national office with another TAHOSA member. The election itself was nerve racking.

The announcement stated, "The HOSA member that will run for national office in Anaheim, California is.....Tamira Cole!" I immediately jumped up and hugged my chapter. It was so unreal, but most importantly a true honor. Jennifer Jeannsonne was the other HOSA member and she and I held a close relationship from running together the year before. As fate would have it, both Jennifer and I made it to the 2002 NLC!

The NLC was filled full of election meetings, exams, campaigning and finally it came down to the one moment I had skipped meals for. "Your new 2002-2003 National HOSA Region II Vice President is.....Tamira Cole from Tennessee." At that moment I couldn't breathe. I ran in front of 5,000 people to begin the start of another journey.

HOSA has given me so many invaluable lessons, friendships, love, support, professional and life skills that I use every single day of my life. My year as a national officer was one of the best years of my life. HOSA members can take confidence, courage, integrity, professionalism, good sportsmanship, and hard work from the organization through many facets. What I was able to give HOSA, as a member was sound leadership that put the ethics and principles of the healthcare profession first. Many times in life we fail to realize the big picture that this moment is the only moment that will ever count in our lives. In some cases, especially in the healthcare profession that is true. For an example, the little girl that has to be revived after swimming too deeply in the pool. In cases such as mine, it was the journey into a deeper understanding of true service. As healthcare professionals, we serve a growing population of people who need care, compassion, leadership and professionalism. HOSA taught me just that.

These experiences prepared me for my fate as a pageant contestant. In 2007, I competed in the Miss Tennessee American system and failed to win a local preliminary as well as becoming Miss Black Tennessee USA in 2008. Determined and strong willed, I looked again toward the lessons of HOSA and thought back to the 2001 SLC and charged forward to compete for Miss Black Kentucky USA. To my surprise, the lessons of HOSA didn't change one bit. I was selected and currently promote my platform YOUth in Action! and will compete for Miss Black USA.

The journey of our lives is what makes the surprises and the obstacles were going through. HOSA gave me a wonderful journey of true self that I take with me each day. When I put on my crown, I remember my moments of being the underdog at the NLC. In HOSA there are no underdogs, but top dogs that serve daily.

