

Getting Involved with HAA

MATTHEW “ROSS” THERIOT

2008 Louisiana State Scholar

Education: BS in mass communication (public relations), McNeese State University; MS in applied child development, Erickson Institute; MS in nursing, University of California, San Francisco (to be completed in 2024)

THE BACKSTORY

After Ross earned his bachelor's degree, he became involved in fundraising for the American Cancer Society and St. Jude's Children's Hospital. "I came to realize," he says, "that you can be really good at something, and not really like it that much." As a result, Ross went back to school to get a master's in a field that interested him: infant development.

In 2014, he completed his master's. He worked as a child developmental specialist, but became dissatisfied with the limitations of his field. "I wasn't able to actually diagnose patients, and I couldn't create a treatment plan for them. That's when I decided to go back to school for another master's degree."

Currently Ross is studying to be a pediatric nurse practitioner and will complete his degree in 2024. "This feels right for me," he says. "I will have a more holistic view of families, about where they are in the health-care process, and ultimately how best to support children."

INVOLVEMENT WITH HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION

After receiving his State Scholarship in 2008, Ross had no contact with the Horatio Alger Association for the next 10 years. In 2018, he received an email from Association headquarters asking for volunteers to serve as team leaders for the upcoming National Scholars Conference. Ross applied and was accepted.





“I had no idea what I was walking into,” says Ross about his first day at the conference. “The other staff members were the most gracious, loving people I’ve ever met. I knew immediately I’d made a good decision to come and be a part of this event. That week had a profound effect on my life.”

Immediately after the conference, Ross ran for and was elected to the Horatio Alger Alumni Advisory Board. “Yeah, 10 years of no contact, and then I really jumped in with both feet,” he says. “But it’s been great. I’ve worked on the Scholar Meet-

Up Committee, which is working on ideas to get Scholars who have shared interests together both in physical and virtual formats. I’m also working on the upcoming Alumni Summit, to be held in New Orleans, October 13–17, 2022.”

SIGNIFICANCE OF INVOLVEMENT

Ross explains, “My father died in 2015. He had always been supportive of who I am and my endeavors, and it wasn’t until I was at the National Scholars Conference with the most supportive and caring individuals I’ve ever known that I felt again the acceptance and encouragement that my father had given me. These are people I now call on my darkest days as well as to share my triumphs.”

Ross adds, “I want to shout out to other State Scholars who don’t understand what the Horatio Alger Association is and what it can do for you. I want to call them to action to learn about and take part in the Association’s activities. Connect with other Alumni because it could—as it did for me—change your life.”

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