

Madison McGuire, OMS-2
Sam Houston State University College of Osteopathic Medicine
AMWA National Member from 2025-Present

Linda Brodsky MD Essay

***Prompt 2:** Dr. Brodsky transformed her personal fight for equity into a movement that supported others. She mentored countless women physicians and founded Women MD Resources to ensure that future generations could thrive. Think of a mentor who has shaped your understanding of equity and advocacy—this could be a family member, teacher, colleague, or physician. Share how this person influenced your path and what lessons you carry from them. If you had to dedicate a song, quote, or symbolic gesture to honor their mentorship, what would it be, and why? Conclude by describing how you hope to “pay it forward” by serving as a mentor or advocate yourself, continuing the legacy of Dr. Brodsky and others who opened doors for you.*

A Place on the Stage: Lessons in Equity and Mentorship

I was unable to hold back tears of pride as I watched Sophie jeté and chaîné across the stage in her pink tutu for the last time. When I had volunteered to help Sophie learn ballet seven years earlier, she used a walker, wore leg braces, and was not expected to live past the age of four due to a rare chromosomal disorder called Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome. Despite this disheartening prognosis, I saw a little girl with the most contagious energy and a keenness to express herself through dance. As the years went on, I moved Sophie’s arms and legs through the choreography each week. I witnessed her strength and confidence grow until she no longer needed her leg braces for support or my hands for guidance. The teachers at my ballet studio told me I had the “patience of a saint” for helping Sophie, but from her I learned to not define others by their limitations or circumstances, a lesson more impactful than anything I could have taught her.

In many ways, Sophie became my first teacher in equity and advocacy. She showed me that access, not ability, is often the true barrier to participation. Ballet studios were not designed with children like Sophie in mind, yet when given patience, adaptation, and belief, she claimed her place on stage. Watching her dance taught me that equity is not about lowering standards but about widening pathways so that everyone has the opportunity to rise to their fullest potential. These lessons became the lens through which I now approach mentorship and leadership in medicine.

As a student at Sam Houston State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, I have been driven to expand opportunities for students who may not yet see themselves reflected in healthcare. This conviction has guided my work leading advocacy efforts as the president of my school’s AMWA chapter as well as directing our “UCanDo” medical camp for East Texas high school students from underserved districts. Each day of the camp, I watch the students step into

Madison McGuire, OMS-2

Sam Houston State University College of Osteopathic Medicine

AMWA National Member from 2025-Present

our classrooms and simulation hospitals hesitant at first, then increasingly confident as they practice clinical skills, don white coats, and begin to imagine themselves as future physicians. With my AMWA chapter, I have extended this mission further upstream by bringing medical students to support Houston's Girls in STEM Day with Girlstart, where younger learners encounter women in science and medicine at a formative moment in their education. Whether guiding a student through a simulated patient encounter or watching a girl's eyes light up as she learns how to use my ophthalmoscope, the impact is the same: demystifying a profession that can feel distant or unattainable for those navigating systemic and personal barriers. These experiences have reaffirmed what Sophie taught me years ago. Equity begins not with talent but with opportunity, encouragement, and the belief that one belongs.

If I could dedicate a song to Sophie, it would be "This Is Me" from *The Greatest Showman*. The song's unapologetic celebration of identity reflects what Sophie embodied each time she stepped onto the stage: joy without apology, courage without permission. She never asked to be seen as extraordinary; she simply asked to be included. In doing so, she reshaped how I see advocacy: not as grand gestures, but as persistent, quiet acts of making space.

Mentorship has been especially valuable to me during medical school because it helps ground me in the reasons I chose this path in the first place. As I move forward in medicine, Sophie's influence follows me into every classroom, clinic, and leadership role I step into. She reminds me to ask who is missing from the room, whose needs are being overlooked, and how systems can be redesigned to serve rather than exclude. In honoring the legacy of Dr. Brodsky, I commit to paying forward the mentorship I was given by continuing to widen the stage so that those who follow are not only invited into medicine but empowered to stand confidently at its center.