



Bradley Welch, an MSU premedical student from Laurel, Mississippi, has created a legacy of scholarship and service at Mississippi State, including the establishment of the Gift of Life bone marrow registry on campus.

Rural Health Awareness

MOTIVATES PREMED STUDENT

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BRADLEY WELCH

Most students prepare themselves to live their dreams after college, but not Bradley Welch. This recent MSU graduate has used his college years to build a legacy.

Welch, a native of Laurel, Mississippi, has studied in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as a premedical student. His choice of major was inspired by his sister's rare medical disorder, primary ciliary dyskinesia. For patients with this syndrome, the cilia, which line the respiratory tract, do not move to help clear mucus.

"We'll occasionally get sick, but bacteria don't normally affect us," Welch said. "That's not the case with her."

During his childhood, Welch spent many hours traveling with his family to medical specialists across the country. Sometimes, his family would spend up to 12 hours a day on the road.

His sister's condition, coupled with his awareness of rural health care, led Welch to spend an intensive 5 weeks studying medicine at MSU in the Rural Medical Scholar (RMS) program before his senior year of high school.

Welch's summer with RMS inspired him to further his education at Mississippi State. What Welch could not foresee, however, was how deeply connected he would become with the university during his 4-year stay.

"I've done some volunteer work through MSU with a group called Global Brigades," Welch said. "Over and over, Honduran people said that they had never been to a doctor before. What amazed me about this experience was the similarities I saw between Honduras and parts of Mississippi."

His humanitarian work is rooted in scholarship. He has completed minors in French and psychology to help him better understand people across the globe.

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Welch achieved one of his most notable accomplishments

during his sophomore year when he founded a Gift of Life bone marrow registry club on campus. Through this group, Welch and other MSU students have swabbed the mouths of more than 1,317 volunteers. Two of these swabs led to marrow transplants, helping a 65-year-old man and a 14-year-old girl.

"Someone we swabbed went through a transplant for someone that they didn't even know, and I think that's amazing," Welch said. "There's roughly only a 1 in 1,000 chance that someone would donate, but we've had two transplants."

While Welch credits all of his professors as invaluable, one of his most influential faculty relationships is with Ann Sansing, director of the RMS program and an instructor with the MSU Extension Service.

"Bradley has the determination, personality, intelligence, and perseverance to run the race set before him," Sansing said. "He is always looking for an avenue to learn, excel, and give back to his passion."

Welch graduated with a degree in biochemistry and is now attending medical school. He plans to become a rural physician or spend time serving others abroad.

"A physician is not only a physician, but an educator and a leader in the community," Welch said. "That's where my heart is at. So, I ask others: What is your legacy?"

BY LINDSAY PACE • PHOTOS BY MEGAN BEAN



Welch credits much of his success at Mississippi State to Ann Sansing (right), director of the MSU Extension Service Rural Medical Scholars program. While in high school, Welch spent a summer as a Rural Medical Scholar, which inspired him to continue his education at MSU.