

## *Ashlee Warren*

Before I even picked up my first medical textbook I knew which area of medicine I wanted to specialize in. My intent from the beginning has been to pursue a career in both family medicine and sports medicine. In fact, this goal is what inspired me to apply to medical school in the first place. With my background and personality I know this combination will be a perfect fit for me.

I grew up in a rural Ohio town that still has only one stoplight and a few grain elevators. In this small community every one knows each other—and their extended families—on a more personal level and, thus, friendships form easily. I want to take this experience from my youth into my medical practice and create enduring, meaningful relationships with my patients and their families. Perhaps most importantly, I want to become a family physician because I will get to be on the front lines of disease prevention and health promotion. I think it is extraordinarily important to take care of our bodies through healthy eating, frequent exercise and regular visits to the doctor. Not only does this lead to longer, healthier lives, but it also cuts down on future healthcare costs. I can think of no better position than one in family medicine that will give me such great opportunity to encourage people to take better care of themselves.

Furthering my training with a fellowship in sports medicine has always been a dream of mine. I have been an athlete all my life, from lettering in three different sports in high school to becoming an All-American rower at the University of Notre Dame. I cannot imagine my life without sports, and I feel my experiences and my passion as an athlete will help me to better relate to my patients. Understanding how important playing is to the athletes, how much they have to sacrifice to achieve their goals, the pressure they may feel from outside sources, how hard they will have to work to recover from injury and how the injury might affect them psychologically will help me to better treat my patients both mentally and physically so that they can have a smooth transition back to competition. In my years of playing I have been fortunate to be under the care of some great doctors or trainers. I know firsthand what a difference a good doctor can make, and I want to *be* that doctor for the athletes who will become my patients.

In the last four years, I have been privileged to experience a remarkable spectrum of medical events. For example, I have delivered babies, I was the “first assistant” on an emergency splenectomy for a patient who was supposed to be getting married that day, I cared for patients who were suicidal and I witnessed what it was like to tell someone he had only had a few months to live. I also assumed two key leadership roles by helping to start a sports medicine interest group and by serving as co-chair for the Family Medicine Leadership Development Program, a group specifically for third- and fourth-year medical students who are part of the Family Practice Interest Group. These experiences have, of course, been formative in developing my competency; but they have also shaped and elevated my personal identity. Nonetheless, those are not the only amazing things I did while in medical school that helped me grow beyond my limits. Over the past four years, I have also swam in the bioluminescent bay in Vieques, Puerto Rico; zipped through the rain forest in Costa Rica; visited the Statue of Liberty in New York City; strolled down Hollywood Boulevard’s Walk of Fame; flew around Mt. McKinley in Alaska; tried (and

failed) to walk one hundred miles of the Appalachian trail in Shenandoah National Park; and literally ran into a grizzly bear and her cub while hiking in the Grand Tetons—and lived to tell about it. While medicine is very important—so important that I consider it my vocation—I also think it is vital for me to define and develop myself as a person outside of medicine. Testing my limits and seeing the real world helps me to grow personally, and it makes it easier for me to relate to my current and future patients. Most of all, it makes me realize how blessed I am to have such special personal relationships already in my life and how lucky I am to have the opportunity to create more as I begin my career in family and sports medicine.