

“Take me home, country roads, to the place I belong...” The voice of John Denver plays in the back of my mind and heart as I reflect on what drives me to doggedly pursue family medicine. I was raised on my family’s 300 acre organic farm, surrounded by hard work, sacrifice, love and faith. My initial aspiration was to become a large animal veterinarian, but as I grew older I saw the need for quality medical care in a rural area and recognized the challenges and rewards of working closely with ordinary people to improve their health. On a whim, I approached my high school guidance counselor about medical school options, and my career plans gently unfolded around me.

The transition to college and then medical school was an uneasy one for me. I never anticipated the challenges of bridging two social classes. I worried that perhaps my family and those who knew me growing up felt that I was becoming “too good for them”, or “less country”. Some days, when I was overwhelmed by the money and status that many of my medical school friends enjoyed, all I wanted was to return home and get dirty on the farm. Questions no one else I knew faced haunted me. I wanted not only a medical career, but a husband and family as well – was I sacrificing one dream for another? I longed to ease back into the comfortable niche that I had once occupied. I hated to think that I was becoming distanced from the life and people I loved most. I struggled to reconcile my choice to pursue medicine and my need to belong.

Throughout this struggle, I was unfailingly attracted to medicine. It’s incredible to know a body so completely, so intimately. I worked hard, and I excelled in my classes. I have a gift in being able to connect well with patients, and I developed this into a comfortable and concise interviewing style. I have created balance and identity within myself by enthusiastically volunteering my time to rural, academic and community organizations.

I felt called to pursue family medicine very early in my first year of medical school, and that calling persisted despite the insistence of many that I was too smart, my board scores too good, and my potential too great to “settle” for a primary care specialty. I know that I am not settling for anything. I am confidently applying to the one specialty that will constantly challenge me while fulfilling me both personally and professionally.

I appreciate that the practice of family medicine realizes the complex social interactions as well as the physical manifestations of disease affecting each individual patient. My long-term goal has always been to return to my hometown to serve the local rural population, and this holistic approach to medical care is most cohesive with my plan. Family medicine will allow me to comprehensively treat all ages of patients in an area of Ohio in which specialists are limited by availability and distance. As a family physician, I will be able to develop lasting relationships with patients – a perk that my social personality cherishes. I have subsequently married an amazing man from my “neck of the woods”, and we are expecting our first child in December. As a wife and mother, I am attracted to the family-friendly atmosphere surrounding the field, and the career flexibility that primary care affords. I also enjoy being able to respond to the need that exists for family physicians in all parts of the country. The call to service drives me.

I have partnered with the local hospital in my hometown to return to practice among the resolute rural people of North Central Ohio, and to maintain and improve the healthcare delivery system to that underserved population. I want a residency program that will prepare me to function with few resources nearby. I need to be trained to confidently practice medicine independently as well as part of a complex healthcare team. I also need to be located in Ohio near our families and my husband’s job.

I want a challenge from family medicine. I know that it is not an easy specialty, and I want a residency program that pushes me to become a skilled community physician. This career opportunity is what I have been working so hard for. It offers me the balance I seek. I am needed to serve as a rural family physician and my heart is thrilled to have the opportunity to return home and do just that.