Faculty kids choose parents’ career path

Classes had barely begun at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy when three first-year students realized they had something in common that set them apart from the other 141 members of the Class of 2016. Leigh Ann Perri, Andrew May and Harrison Jozefczyk are all children of College of Pharmacy faculty who also work in the same department. Father Matthew Perri is a professor of Clinical and Administrative Pharmacy and J. Russell May is a clinical professor in the department’s clinical program in Augusta. Kenneth Jozefczyk, an adjunct member of the department, is the Director of Pharmacy at Memorial University Medical Center in Savannah.

Very few other students in the College’s 109-year history have followed in their parents’ footsteps. Leigh Ann and Andrew, both 28-year-olds, hold previous bachelor degrees earned in 2006 – Leigh Ann was trained in early childhood education at UGA and worked several years as an elementary school teacher; Andrew earned his degree in business administration at Appalachian State University. Neither career path claimed their interests enough to prevent them from dedicating the next four years of their lives to the study of pharmacy.

Said Leigh Ann, “My mother was an elementary teacher and I babysat a lot as a teenager, so teaching seemed natural for me. But once in the classroom I realized that I really didn’t enjoy it.”

“I wanted to stay in a service-oriented profession, however, so I turned to pharmacy,” she added, saying that her dad tried to be neutral about her decision. “His only advice was to make sure that I was fully committed.”

Perri said he always knew his daughter would become a pharmacist, “one day or another.” “Teaching was only a temporary diversion,” he said “When she was little I’d take her to work with me. She’d sit on the counter and make all sorts of concoctions; she loved it,” he said, adding that he admires her courage and dedication to enter a profession with tight hiring practices, especially when she also has had to take so many prerequisite classes.

Leigh Ann doesn’t shy away from hard work, however, and expects to continue a lifetime of learning. She has worked for several years at a local independent pharmacy and enjoys compounding the most, along with direct contact with patients.
Andrew just didn’t find a good fit managing retail stores after graduation, he said. He felt his work was too repetitive and money-oriented rather than focused on service.

“My father had always seemed happy in his career so I began to look seriously at a pharmacy degree,” he said, adding that his mother and stepmother are also pharmacists. “When I started college I just wasn’t ready to devote the time needed for a pharmacy degree,” he said. Right now clinical pharmacy seems to have the most appeal but he’s not ruling out the possibility of retail pharmacy, or even owning his own store some day.

May is very proud of his son and excited that he has found his niche.

“I was an instructor in one of his first classes and tried very hard not to embarrass him in class by telling everyone that I was his dad,” said May. “It can be tricky having your child in class, so I made sure the teaching assistant graded his papers, not me.”

Twenty-year-old Harrison has never doubted that he wanted to be a hospital pharmacist, just like his dad and his grandfather.

“My earliest memories are being in my dad’s office at the hospital. Now I’m just happy to be here and face the challenges of being a pharmacy student,” he said, adding that he enjoys being able to relate his experiences to his family, who are pleased with his choice.

“He likes to compare notes with his granddad about his time in pharmacy school,” said his father. “I think he appreciates the historical perspective of following his dad and granddad into the pharmacy profession.”

“We tried not to push him and let him make his own decision,” he added. “Clearly by high school he had made his choice.”

Harrison has already spent summers volunteering in various areas of hospital pharmacy, including critical care pharmacy where he appreciates the hands-on work with patients. Whatever his future career holds he definitely expects to complete a residency and maybe even a master’s degree.