

# Accident triggered interest in medicine

By Ryan McCarthy

rmccarthy@keynoter.com

Posted - Wednesday, September 25, 2013 08:01 AM EDT

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A career in medicine wasn't always in the forefront of Marathon native Chris Garrett's mind.

He did much the same thing as thousands of his fellow Florida State University students, changing his major on numerous occasions. So much so that he fell just a course short of achieving five separate minor concentrations.

The 23-year-old was focused on pursuing his passion to play baseball, even enduring a grueling rehab from a near-fatal 2009 car accident in Northern California to return to the game. He was rewarded with a torn rotator cuff and lots of time to think about what comes next. "Before I was in the accident I was focused on trying to play baseball and school was secondary. I wasn't ignoring my grades or anything, but after that I tried playing some more and tore my rotator cuff," Garrett explained.

It would have been nice to have a less painful epiphany, but the silver lining was Garrett developed an appreciation for all things medicine.

"I've been so surrounded by medicine and I was so engulfed in the medical world that it gave me insight into what I really enjoyed about medicine. I started looking at it as a degree," he said.

The end result for the 2008 Marathon High School graduate was an exercise science degree this past May and a 2014 admission to the Florida State University College of Medicine.

Garrett starts classes on May 27 and should be pretty well booked until he's at least 30 years old. There will be four years of medical school, followed by a three- to five-year residency and possibly a fellowship in whatever specialty he might pursue.

That's all well and good, Garrett told the Keynoter. He's found his calling and is more than willing to see it through.



Marathon High School grad Chris Garrett, shown here with his parents George Garrett and Debbie Harrison-Rumberger, is pursuing a degree in the medical field after being admitted to Florida State University College of Medicine.

He's working now as a medical assistant at the general practice office of Dr. John MacKay in Tallahassee, giving injections and immunizations, taking blood pressures and administering electrocardiogram (EKG) tests, among other things.

He's also worked with Tallahassee orthopedic surgeon Dr. Steve Jordan and done emergency room rotations at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital.

"I love being in the office and working. I wouldn't change it for the world. I love the people and the work I'm doing. Dealing with the patients is what I love and enjoy doing," Garrett said.

He's got a couple of proud parents as well in city of Marathon Planning Director George Garrett and Debbie Harrison-Rumberger, a well-known Keys environmental activist and former longtime director of the World Wildlife Fund's Florida program.

"He's worked very hard and been extremely conscientious. His success reflects a strong involvement from the Marathon community," Harrison-Rumberger said. "I feel proud for our whole community that we can raise our kids and launch them into successful careers."

"He's done great. I can't say any more," George Garrett said. "I couldn't be prouder."

Chris said he appreciates all the love and support his parents have offered up over the years.

"It's all from them. I would never be the person I am without their influence," he said.

Now Garrett just has to make mom happy and move back to the Keys once school is finished.

"I love the Keys. I would come back in a heartbeat but it depends on where the job takes me," he said.