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Office of University
Communications

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Trey Miller, '08, Helps Make Dreams Come True for Children with Life-Altering Conditions



When Trey Miller graduated from Gardner-Webb University in 2008, the thought of becoming a dentist hadn't entered his mind. The Kannapolis, N.C., resident certainly had no idea that in the middle of a pandemic he would open his own practice, Smile Solutions Dentistry in Harrisburg, N.C.

Despite the uncertainty, Miller said people call his practice every day to schedule appointments. "People are happy. They love the practice, and they are leaving Google Reviews," Miller observed. "It's not the blast off I wanted, but this isn't normal times so considering the situation, I think we're doing well. I'm optimistic."

Not only is each new patient special to him, but every patient is contributing to a cause that is near to his heart. Miller has partnered with an organization in Harrisburg, "Dream on 3 Foundation." The non-profit is like The Make-a-Wish Foundation, but focuses on making sports-based dreams come true for children with chronic illnesses, intellectual and developmental disabilities and life-altering conditions. With each new patient, he will donate money to the foundation to help make a child's wish come true.

“For me, it was a great opportunity, because I’ve had sports as the foundation of my life, from baseball to cycling, that’s 25 years of my life,” Miller asserted. “To be able to give somebody else those same opportunities, just a little piece of what has made me what I am today, that’s why I chose them (the Dream on 3 Foundation).”



Miller, a native of Hickory, N.C., was recruited to play baseball at Gardner-Webb, but that wasn’t the only reason he accepted the scholarship. “There was something about Gardner-Webb—it just felt like it was home,” Miller reflected. “I remember leaving and saying, ‘This is it; this is the place for me.’ It had that hometown feel. It was the feeling I got when I walked around campus and the sense of community it had.”

However, he experienced a knee injury during his first semester as catcher. Despite the injury, former baseball coach Rusty Stroupe kept him on the team for three years, giving him some playing time. After two knee surgeries, Miller left the team and focused his energies on academics. He graduated with a 3.8 grade point average and was inducted into the Tri-Beta Honor Society.

He was a biology major, with a minor in chemistry and concentration in psychology. He had intended to go to medical school, but after completing several internships, he decided against a career in medicine.

Miller was given the opportunity to work as a lab assistant at Gardner-Webb and that experience got him his first job. “I’m a big outdoorsmen – big into fly fishing – I just got really big into conservation,” Miller related. “I did an internship that led to a job with Mecklenburg County (N.C.). I ended up working in downtown Charlotte (N.C.) for five years, before going to dental school.”

While working in Charlotte, he started racing all over the country as a professional cyclist. He met his wife, who was also racing bikes. His in-laws and her brother, who is a dentist, made an interesting observation during a holiday meal. “We were all sitting around at Thanksgiving dinner and my in-laws decided



that I would be a really great pediatric dentist,” Miller explained. “It was real uncomfortable, but then I started thinking about it. I love working with my hands, I love making relationships with people. I love helping people, and I feel like I am physically doing something to help someone in another way. It kind of all came together.”

He needed a reference for his application to dental school. He called Dr. Tom Jones, GWU professor of biology and Dr. Don Olive, GWU associate professor of physics and astronomy, and was reminded again why Gardner-Webb is a special place. “I still had professors’ phone numbers,” Miller said. “Tom Jones answered the phone in the middle of his lecture and said, ‘Hey Trey, what is going on?’ He and I were buddies. We had traveled together—we went on Katrina relief trips and we played golf. He said, ‘I will write you a letter of recommendation and get it to you this week.’”

Miller continued, “Dr. Olive was also glad to write me a letter. That was almost five years after I graduated. If I had gone to a big university, they would have been like, who, what number are you? I was so thankful to have gone to Gardner-Webb, a small university so that I had those types of relationships.”

In addition to the references, he also had all the prerequisites he needed and the grades to get into dental school at West Virginia University. He graduated in 2017 with his Doctor of Dental Surgery, and after three years of experience, opened his own practice in April 2020.

“I knew from the start of dental school that I wanted to have my own practice,” Miller affirmed. “Life is about being fulfilled and fulfillment for me is growth, the ability to help others and have a meaningful impact on people’s lives.”

For more information, <https://smilesolutionsdentistrync.com/>.

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