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Sisters of mercy -- alumni siblings find their dream jobs as veterinarians

(By Katie Land, news editor; additional writing by Kevin Knapp)

Two years separated a pair of sisters during their days as Oakland University students, but both held tight to a common dream of becoming a veterinarian. Today, their shared vision is a reality for Michelle Meyer, '02, and Kristin Donovan, '04. Both graduated from OU with biology degrees and made it into exclusive veterinary school programs. Ultimately, both have landed their dream jobs as veterinarians.

Michelle was a senior when Kristin entered OU as a freshman. That age gap didn't prevent the sisters from Washington Township, Mich., from sharing college-life experiences and keeping each other on their toes academically. It did, however, allow Michelle to play mentor to her younger sister.

"I felt like I could give her advice based on my experiences and did my best to help her if she needed it," Michelle says. "Kristin is a very intelligent person and often did not need my help, but I was there to offer advice on professors, classes to choose from, and to try and get her involved in the campus."

The sisters were active throughout their college career, running cross country together and forming bonds with professors. "My experience at OU was unforgettable. In fact, attending OU was probably the smartest thing I have ever done in life," Michelle says.

Kristin attended OU on a full scholarship and with high expectations. "Michelle was the one that first chose to attend OU, and by witnessing the experience she had with the college, it made my decision to attend OU an easy one."

With only 28 accredited veterinary colleges in the country and ever-changing acceptance standards, the path to becoming a veterinarian is not an easy one. Rising to the challenge, Michelle graduated from Purdue University's School of Veterinary Medicine in 2007 and Kristin completed Michigan State's program this spring.

Michelle now practices at the Serenity Animal Hospital in Sterling Heights, Mich., and Kristin practices at the Wilson Veterinary Hospital in Washington Township, Mich., and the Animal Clinic of Sterling Heights.

"Veterinary school possesses what I feel is an extremely rigorous curriculum that requires an immense amount of time and dedication," Kristin says. "The challenge of the courses at Oakland University and the time management skills that I built as a student there prepared me to face the veterinary program that lay ahead at MSU."

Kristin points to her experiences with family pets in her youth as the inspiration for becoming a veterinarian.

"My first cat died of a rare heart condition and my second cat passed away at a young age from a blood disorder. Through those experiences, I was introduced to veterinarians, who I found to be some of the most intelligent and compassionate people in the medical field. I was intrigued by their personalities and abilities they possess. I knew then that this was the path that I wanted to take too."

Sister Michelle says she enjoys working in the field because every day is different than the previous one.

"It's always a challenging field, working with animals," she explains, "because they can't tell you what's bothering them."

Unfortunately, the sisters lost their greatest supporter in 2006, when their mother, Linda Martin, passed away. She missed Michelle's graduation and Kristin's wedding. The sisters credit her influence and guidance in helping to push them to go to OU, to run cross country and to apply to veterinary school.

"My mother and I even went antiquing with one of the biology professors," Michelle said. "I wish I could fully explain to you the dedication of the professors at OU. Two of the biology professors actually took time out of their day to attend my mother's funeral. I only hope they realize that it meant the world to me."

Even today, OU has continued to play a central part in Michelle's life. Her husband, Steven Meyer, is an assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences -- and an OU alum, as well. The couple is expecting their first child in March.

SUMMARY

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