



Outstanding Young Alumnus

Patrick L. Basile, MD '03

I have a vivid memory of being eight years old and finding a dead frog in my back yard and wondering to myself, "how did this frog die?" A short time later, my mother found me in the kitchen with a dinner plate as an operating table and a butter knife as my scalpel. Inquiring as to what I was doing, I simply responded that I wanted to see "what was wrong inside." I had always spent a lot of time taking things apart and putting them back together again just to see how they worked. My experiment with the frog, however, was my first step in wondering about something that was once alive.

My journey to becoming a physician didn't start there, however. This privilege of helping people began more than 43 years ago, when I was born in Bogotá, Colombia, to a mother who was not able to care for me. Shortly after birth, she placed me in an orphanage called Casa de la Madre y el Niño—Home of the Mother and the Child, hoping for a better life for her child. By the grace of God, a family from New York who was looking to provide love, hope, and opportunity took me in as a son of their own. To this day, words cannot describe the feeling I get when I reflect back on the selfless act of love and the sacrifice that both my birth mother and adoptive family have given me. It humbles me and is a constant reminder to keep life in perspective.

After receiving an acceptance to medical school, I applied for the Health Professions Scholarship Program through the U.S. Navy to help pay for school because I was now married and had a small child. I accepted a commission as an officer and embarked on a career with the military, which would be on hold to attend medical school and complete residency training.

I remember the first day of medical school at Upstate Medical University and the white coat ceremony like it was yesterday. I could not believe I had made it and was surrounded by such amazing people. The class of 2003 was a special class and the relationships I developed are ones that I continue to cherish. A small group of guys—we called ourselves "The Five Families"—gravitated toward one another and remain best friends today. Unfortunately, one of the five, Patrick Mathews, MD '03, passed away shortly after starting residency. We will always remember Pat as a dedicated family man and devoted friend.

Medical school was an incredible experience for me. Not only did we welcome a second child into

our family, but it is where I met two men who would help mentor and shape me into the person I am today. I met N. Barry Berg, PhD, during my first day of anatomy class. He was the head of the program, and after my first year, invited me to work for him during summer break. This was an exciting time as he set me loose and I was able to perform dissections still used in the anatomy lab today. He also pointed me in the direction of Anthony Deboni, MD '90. Dr. Deboni, a clinical faculty member and accomplished plastic surgeon, saw promise in me and invited me into his OR whenever I had free time. He also spent countless hours answering my questions. He, by his example, is the reason I wanted to be a plastic surgeon and to this day continues to mentor me as I continue my journey.

Plastic surgery residency at the University of Rochester was the next stop. It was an amazing experience being at one of the top programs in the country and having the opportunity to train and learn with the best. The roots of our program ran deep and our graduates were the leaders in our field. I was confident that I was in the right place and took advantage of every opportunity to learn. My teachers led by example and taught with positive reinforcement. They ignited the fire inside me to want to teach and this is something that I will forever be grateful for. My wife and I had three children now and finding the balance between work and family helped prepare me for the next stage of my career.

I reported to the National Naval Medical Center shortly after graduation from residency in the summer of 2009 not knowing what to expect. I joined a group of young surgeons who were throttled into a war and presented with injury patterns that were not seen in prior conflicts. We were the primary military treatment center accepting wounded casualties and had to figure out on our own how to handle our injured service members. It was an interesting time because, on one hand, I felt honored to be one of the chosen few to take care of these wounded warriors, and on the other hand, I felt like no one should have to see what we saw. Our hospital combined with the Walter Reed Army Medical Center to become Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where I was appointed as assistant chief of plastic surgery and the director of microsurgery. During my tenure, I was a lead surgeon in wounded warrior care, helped nurture the breast reconstruction program, and expanded the



aesthetic offerings at the hospital. I was blessed to be asked to share our work on an international level and was nominated twice for the American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery Best Case/Save of the Year. These accomplishments led to faculty appointments at both Johns Hopkins University and the University of Pittsburgh. I had the privilege of being a part of the first bilateral arm transplant at Johns Hopkins and was involved in cutting-edge research. One of the most rewarding opportunities I had during my time in uniform was serving as the commanding officer for the Department of Defense's yearly humanitarian cleft lip and palate mission, where we helped thousands of patients over 10 years.

As the war wound down and I found myself content with what we had accomplished, I realized that my time in the Navy was over and it was time for the family and I to find some normalcy. We had two more kids during our military time and I wanted to focus on my wife and our growing family. We moved to Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, and after briefly joining a group practice, I ventured out on my own, starting a plastic surgery and wellness center with the feel of



Clockwise from left: Dr. Basile and family. Isabella, Dr. Basile, Vincent, Noah, Kateri, Shannon (wife), Xavier, Hope.

Dr. Basile and his mentor Dr. Anthony Deboni, Class of 1990



The Five Families of Upstate, spring 2003: Patrick L. Basile, MD '03, Mathew Miller, MD '03, Patrick Mathews, MD '03, Russell Pecoraro, MD '03, Victor Chiappa, MD '03.

an old-school family practice. At this point, we also welcomed our sixth child into our lives. These last few years have been both some of the most rewarding and challenging times we have gone through, but sticking together and believing in ourselves has created opportunities and experiences that are unique to such a young practice.

I continue to be invited to lecture around the world to teach and train the next generation of surgeons. Our work has been acknowledged in numerous magazines, newspapers, on television, and in books, including the Wall Street Journal, and most recently, in Oliver North's book American Heroes: On the Homefront. I recently signed on as the official plastic surgeon of the Jacksonville Jaguars, and alongside my son, have created a young non-profit organization called Project MD, which helps mentor high school kids interested in medicine.

It is a privilege each day to serve others and my foundations are rooted at Upstate Medical University. I owe a lot to my professors and classmates who challenged me daily and never let me accept anything less than the best. I also thank my wife Shannon and children Hope, Noah, Isabella, Vincent, Kateri, and Xavier for believing in the dream and helping make it happen.

Bio submitted by Dr. Basile