

Alton Memorial Paramedic Brian Fogarty Eyes Medical School

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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ALTON - Medicine hardly seemed like a calling for Brian Fogarty when he was finishing high school in 2011.

“I was scared of crisis,” Fogarty said. “The sight of blood made me uncomfortable.”

But Fogarty, a paramedic with the Alton Memorial Hospital EMS team since 2015, has learned things about himself he never imagined over the past several years and taken advantage of opportunities that weren’t always planned to bring him now to the cusp of an unexpected future.

He is awaiting acceptance to medical school after graduating summa cum laude with a degree in biology at the University of Missouri–St. Louis.

“As long as I become a physician, I will be happy with any medical school,” Fogarty said. “The service aspect of it is what I really appreciate the most. It just gives me a great sense of purpose, being there for people during stressful times.”

Fogarty, a native of Hazelwood, MO., had been contemplating a career in the military when he graduated from North County Christian School in 2011. He enrolled at the University of Missouri-Columbia and planned to go through the Naval Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program as a step toward becoming an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps.

But he quickly realized that path wasn’t for him. He’d also had a difficult time adjusting to the rigors of college coursework.

“My first semester at Mizzou was definitely a wake-up call,” said Fogarty, who left Columbia after that semester. He decided becoming a firefighter might suit him better, so he started preparing to apply to the St. Louis County Fire Academy.

Fogarty first had to undergo training as an emergency medical technician. He admits now he was nervous when he enrolled at St. Louis Community College to fulfill that requirement. But something surprising happened when Fogarty landed a part-time job as an emergency department technician at Mercy Hospital South in 2013.

“I fell in love with it,” he said. “I really appreciate being there for people. I find a sense of passion and purpose in helping others who are experiencing a crisis.

Fogarty graduated from the Fire Academy in 2014, but soon after, he decided to work on an ambulance suited him better than putting out blazes. He sought additional training to become a paramedic, earning his associate degree in Paramedic Technology from St. Louis Community College in 2014 and his critical care paramedic certification from IHM Academy of EMS in 2015.

He worked full-time as an emergency department paramedic at SSM Health St. Joseph's Hospital-Lake St. Louis and then DePaul Hospital while working per diem as a paramedic on the ambulance with Alton Memorial Hospital EMS. He then left DePaul to work full-time as a paramedic on a St. Louis Fire Department ambulance in 2016.

"I felt that I could be doing more for patients," he said. "I wanted to increase my knowledge, help in a more active role, and lead in a greater capacity."

That started him on his pursuit of a bachelor's degree, so he could apply to medical school and become a physician. He enrolled at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Fogarty chose to major in biology, figuring it would best prepare him for medical school and allow him to transfer a few of his credits from his associate degree.

Fogarty also just recently accepted employment as a flight paramedic with ARCH, on a helicopter stationed in Highland, Ill. He does all of that while continuing to work a couple of shifts per week as a paramedic and American Heart Association instructor at AMH, gaining further experience and displaying a level of discipline and time management that will serve him well in medical school.

Brian is a very knowledgeable and thorough paramedic who provides the highest level of patient care," said Jason Bowman, manager of EMS at AMH. "He is an outstanding paramedic and it is a blessing to have such a great employee working here at AMH."

He took the MCAT in January 2020 and has applied to approximately 40 medical schools. Wherever he ends up for medical school, Fogarty envisions himself remaining close to his roots in emergency medicine.

"I'm leaning toward emergency medicine, with an ultimate goal of being an EMS medical director," he said. "I think my professional experiences as an ED tech, ED medic, medic on the ambulance, and flight medic will bring a versatile approach to being an emergency medicine physician and EMS medical director.

"Now I just remain calm under stress. I've really learned how to do that well over the last eight years. During chaotic situations, I'm able to focus on what needs to be done and be there for the patient."