

Catalyst Profile
Cody Wingler

Deep in the heart of Alexander County, North Carolina, Cody Wingler, who graduated in 2006, is doing well by doing good. As a doctor at Iredell Family Care Center, this Taylorsville native is giving back by serving those who once served him. Each day, stethoscope in hand, he cares for former classmates, high school teachers, and “folks” he grew up with.

“Serving my hometown is very fulfilling,” said Wingler. “Never get a job just because it’s a job; there’s no fulfillment in that.”

Since middle school, Wingler has wanted to be a doctor. As a teen, he even spent afternoons shadowing a physician. Oddly enough, however, he truly began delving into medicine while studying history at WCU.

Though initially a biology major, a liberal studies course with James Lewis, professor emeritus, inspired Wingler to change his path. History, he says, challenged him to think, reason, and process large amounts of information.

Nonetheless, no matter the subject, Wingler made sure to excel. As a first generation student, he worked harder, guiding himself through college with no family precedent to follow. Since he couldn’t “draw from anyone else’s experiences,” he knew he had to chart his own course.

Thus, hoping to develop medical skills, the WCU alumnus began spending Monday evenings at the Good Samaritan Clinic, then stationed out of Sylva’s health department. At first, he manned the front desk, checking health insurance cards and patient incomes. From there, Wingler began taking blood pressures, temperatures, and patient histories.

The three-hour shifts shed light on the financial challenges families face. Unlike many prospective medical school applicants, Wingler became familiar with the entire process—from the waiting area to the exam room.

“Some doctors never get the chance to see patients come all the way through,” said Wingler. “I began to feel their pain with insurance troubles and income restrictions. Most can’t afford it.”

With this in mind, Wingler headed off to East Carolina University’s Brody School of Medicine, ultimately graduating in 2010. Now, as a father of two, he hopes to one day open up his own free clinic.

“Do what you love and what you’re passionate about,” said Wingler. “Never give up on that dream.”