

Rachel Todd...from Page 1A

friends that she completed her undergraduate education with such high distinction.

Furthermore, Todd earned a minor in Latin American Studies from the prestigious university while maintaining a sub-focus in Molecular Biology and being a pre-medical student.

In addition to her comprehensive studies, Todd participated in various extracurricular activities, including the Princeton Pre-Medical Society, GlobeMed, the Princeton Rock Climbing Team, and El Centro volunteer classes teaching English as a second language.

A lifelong piano player, Todd somehow managed to find the time to continue private piano lessons through the university's Department of Music, and she broadened both her personal and academic horizons by taking advantage of multiple study-abroad opportunities at Princeton.

Having always been fascinated with Spanish language and cultures, it made sense for Todd that, time and again throughout her college career, she found herself drawn to Latin America.

She studied in Argentina the summer of 2016; conducted traditional medicine field research during a medical internship in Peru after her second year; and journeyed as a senior to Ecuador on a medical mission trip with her Spanish class.

Todd wrote her senior thesis on research she conducted about genetic Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease in Medellin, Colombia, for which she received Princeton's Ricardo Piglia Best Senior Thesis Prize, and ultimately, her wanderings helped her to realize a greater appreciation for people who are far from home but never far from her heart.

"I traveled to places that many Americans would think were 'Third World' countries, to use the outdated term, but I found some of the happiest, hard-working and loving people there," Todd said.

In July, Todd will begin a yearlong Project 55 Fellowship with the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services in Brooklyn,



Princeton graduate Rachel Todd, left, during one of her many Latin America study abroad opportunities in recent years.

New York, during which time she will apply to medical school with a fall 2020 start date in mind.

And though she hasn't decided on a medical specialty yet, Todd does know - as she always has - that she wants to be a doctor.

"For me, the Spanish and medicine pieces fit together largely because of the growing population of Latinos in the U.S.," said Todd. "Not only has my major specifically prepared me to work with them, but it has also taught me to be more tolerant of difference and to consider the cultural, socioeconomic and psychological aspects of a patient along with the biological symptoms."

Todd credits Union County Schools with laying the basic groundwork for her education, though she said what really compelled her to succeed under the pressure of a Princeton-level course load was her strong work ethic and fear of failure.

Of course, education is a core value in the Todd Family. Rachel's mother, Cynthia, is a fourth-grade teacher at Union County Elementary, and her father, Phillip, has done contracting work with institutions like the National Science Foundation.

"My mom always pushed me to be better, study harder and get better grades when I was younger," said Todd. "That drive has been constant throughout college, but now it

comes from myself rather than from my parents.

"She also stressed the importance of being an independent, self-sustaining woman, so I carry that self-preservation aspect with me. Dad always said B's were good enough, so he was a good balance to my mom. He helped keep things in perspective."

Her sister, Hannah, is a rising junior at Union County High, and as someone who has been to faraway places and experienced more of what life has to offer, Todd has some worldly advice for Hannah and her young peers.

"Try out new activities and subjects and find things that motivate you to get up every morning," said Todd. "Educate yourself, check the validity of your information sources, and don't just fall back on your parents' political, social or religious beliefs."

"True faith and love come from you actively choosing what to follow and knowing why you follow it. Be kind and show grace to others; it doesn't cost anything to do so, and it makes life a bit easier. Value yourself enough to find your highest use and happiness as a human being."

Following her June 4 graduation, the Princeton graduate returned briefly to Blairsville, where she received a warm welcome home from her family and friends in a special celebration at the Union County Community Center on Saturday, June 15.

Legacy Link...from Page 1A



The June 10 public meeting at the Senior Center was a well-attended event.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

those in attendance what each of their divisions within the organization focuses on and how it benefits the community, and they fielded questions from those in attendance.

Many of the questions that were asked at the meeting revolved around senior transportation, living arrangements and healthcare.

"You find many people giving up their own homes because they cannot continue to do work in the yard on their lawn, to pick up the garbage, or whatever," said event attendee Patricia Hanks. "I think it would be nice if they could categorize a bunch of people who have a talent for doing these things to give us a Senior Center rate, so that more people could afford to maintain their homes."

Another concern expressed in the meeting dealt with the issue of some seniors actually wanting to downgrade their living arrangements for something more manageable but not being able to find anything due to a lack of affordable senior living.

Some in attendance suggested creating a sort of retirement community that provides for senior needs and gives them access to services at a more affordable rate, as well as having people that can help those who need more transportation due to health issues.

The main transportation

concern falls on transportation during the weekend, when it is harder to find a local service that will take non-driving seniors to their homes or wherever they may need.

Each of these concerns and thoughts was taken into account by Legacy Link personnel, and they hope to work toward finding solutions to some of the issues identified that day.

"I think the meeting was very beneficial to the Senior Center and the community," said Union County Senior Center Director Kathy Hill. "You can tell them all day long about these programs, but when they sit with these people and listen to what they can do and how they can help, they feel more comfortable and closer to the programs."

And Patricia Hanks agreed wholeheartedly.

"I feel it is very necessary for the seniors to have this input," said Hanks. "The

reason is, we brought all of our families up, but now we don't have anyone to look out for us but ourselves, and this is the way we can look out for ourselves."

"All that input was excellent. The next time you come, you will find 10 more things to put in there, and that's how this is going to grow."

For more information on the programs offered at the Senior Center, visit LegacyLink.org, or call the Senior Center at 706-439-6105.

United Daughters of the Confederacy Smith's Legion

United Daughters of the Confederacy Smith's Legion #2699 meet the 4th Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. at G and G Restaurant on Highway 515 in Blairsville, GA.

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