



Trystan Yzaguirre completed the first step of his journey to become a medical doctor in May, when he graduated with an associate in arts degree from Florida SouthWestern State College in LaBelle.

Since graduation, Yzaguirre has moved on and is attending the University of Miami where he is a chemistry/biology major on the pre-med track with a minor in music.



Trystan Yzaguirre gets in the “U” mindset, or handset, on the University of Miami’s Coral Gables campus Aug. 18. (Courtesy photo)

“I’ve always been interested in science and medicine,” said Yzaguirre, 20. “With all the things I’ve done with my disease, I just want to help other people.”

At age 2, Yzaguirre was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, a progressive genetic disorder that causes persistent lung infections when mucus clogs airways in the lungs. Treatment with medication and therapy has helped him manage the disease and pursue his dreams.

“He does breathing treatments every single day,” said Donna Kaye Yzaguirre, Trystan’s mother. “There’s a lot he can’t do because of his lung capacity, but he’s never used it as an excuse to slack off.”

Yzaguirre plans to be a neurosurgeon and specifically didn’t want to go into pulmonology, the medical specialty that deals with diseases of the respiratory tract, including CF. As a patient for his entire life, Yzaguirre said he is ready to tackle something else.

“I would rather help people in other ways,” he said. “Cystic fibrosis patients can’t be near each other anyway because of the danger of infection.”

Doctors weren’t sure how playing saxophone would affect Yzaguirre’s lung capacity, but he joined the school band in seventh grade and became good enough to move up to a professional caliber instrument. Every CF patient is different, but in Yzaguirre’s case playing sax improved his lung

capacity noticeably. He didn't play regularly while attending FSW and saw his capacity diminish a bit, but that didn't prevent him from auditioning for and being accepted into UM's pep and marching bands.

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Trystan Yzaguirre poses with his saxophone for his high school senior photo. (Courtesy photo)

Yzaguirre expects it will take about two years to complete the UM pre-med program, another four

years of medical school followed by a surgical internship and residency of about six or seven years. At that point he will have to decide whether to work at a hospital or in private practice.

In mid-August he moved into an apartment across the street from the university's Coral Gables campus and looks forward to diving into his studies. His mother cleaned the apartment and filled his freezer before she headed home to Immokalee.

"He wants to be a world renowned neurosurgeon," said Kaye Yzaguirre. "I told him if you're going to dream, dream big."

CF is a terminal disease and shortens life expectancy. Kaye Yzaguirre wants her son to have the best life he can and fully immerse himself in college life.

"I'm just so proud of him for what he's become and what he's doing," she said. "I'm amazed at the person he's become. I'm honored that God thought enough of me to allow me to be his mom."

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