

Island's newest Rhodes Scholar

By Jessie Moniz

Alisha Gabriel always knew she would one day become a doctor.

What she didn't know was that she would win a prestigious scholarship along the way.

The 24-year-old is the Island's newest Rhodes Scholar, the recipient of a renowned scholarship for people attending Oxford University.

"I was almost in disbelief when I got the phone call from the Rhodes secretary but once it sunk in I was ecstatic," she said. "It was definitely a moment I will remember for a long time. It is such an honour to be able to study at Oxford and I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity. I am humbled at the prospect of joining such a brilliant and talented network of people and I hope to develop new skills and knowledge that I can bring back to Bermuda."

The scholarship is a testament to all of the support, encouragement and love she received from her friends, family and mentors, Miss Gabriel said:

She is currently studying at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and expects to graduate in June with a bachelor's degree in medicine, surgery and obstetrics. She has been accepted at Hertford College, where she intends to pursue a master of science in public health at the Department of Public Health, Oxford University.

"Soon I will be able to count the hours until I finish medical school," she said. "It is less than 15 days until I finish. I recently received a residency position in Canada to do my specialisation in paediatrics. It takes about five more years of working in hospitals to become a qualified paediatrician. After my first year of residency, I will be taking some time off to go to Oxford [next] October."

Once she is finished her master's degree and specialisation she hopes to return to Bermuda to practise.

"I have always known that I was meant to become a doctor and I've never really considered another career," she said. "When I was young I remember being so inspired by my paediatrician's compassion, patience and encouragement. The care and advice I received had a profound influence on my well-being and it made me realise what a difference a good doctor can have on a person's life."

She said a love of children has led her to specialise in paediatric medicine. When she goes into practice she will be working with a range of ages — from newborns to young adults.

"Delivering my first baby was one of the scariest and most amazing experiences I've ever had," she said. "It made me really appreciate mothers a lot more. I chose paediatrics because, frankly, I absolutely love children. When you are working with children you can't help but be in a good mood because they are so much fun. I also really enjoy the variety in paediatrics. One day you may be taking care of a brand new baby and the next day an adolescent. I really had trouble choosing one speciality

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really liking all the specialities I came across. I really enjoy anaesthesia as well so I'm hoping to do a subspecialty in either paediatric intensive care or neonatal intensive care so I can merge the two specialities."

Throughout medical school, she has earned high honours and was the recipient of a long list of scholarships including the Paget Parish Scholarship, the Oil Scholarship, the Montpelier Re Scholarship and the Knowledge Quest/Green Family scholarships. She was awarded the RCSI Biomedical Medal and was chosen as a finalist for the Dennis Gill Paediatrics Medal. Due to her excellent academic standing, she won the RCSI alumni research grant and conducted research on solar disinfection of drinking water for communities in the developing world.

She is the daughter of Charlene Gabriel of Paget and the granddaughter of Corinne

and Rendell Tungate of Paget. She attended Mount St Agnes Academy, The Holy Education Academy and Bermuda High School for Girls. She spent her first five years of secondary school at Academie Ste Cecile International High School (ASCI) where she achieved top grades and received an award of merit for her Ontario secondary school degree.

As a teenager she worked as a summer student at the Edward VII Memorial Hospital for five years. During the summer, she conducted and designed a research project at the hospital, to study the transmission of MRSA, a contagious staphylococcus bacterium through the use of stethoscopes. She is also the founder and chair of the Bermuda Medical Students' Society which aims to advise and provide mentorship.

She has been an accomplished swimmer, and as a young adult distinguished herself in basketball, music and long-distance swimming.

