

Not Only a Doctor

MICHAEL SOILEAU, M.D., FROM BEAUMONT, Texas, is in his third year of a neurology residency at the U-M. As an undergraduate at Baylor University, he registered to be a bone marrow donor. One day last year he got a call that changed his life — and that of a complete stranger.

INTERVIEW BY WHITLEY HILL
PHOTO BY J. ADRIAN WYLIE

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I WAS DRIVING HOME, EXHAUSTED, after a 30-hour shift. I got a call I didn't recognize; it was the National Bone Marrow Registry. They'd found a match — was I still interested? I said yes, absolutely.

“Rotating through the cancer service at U-M, I took care of patients who needed transplants so this was really special to me. Now I was not only a doctor, but helping someone as a donor.

“It's easier than people think: five shots in five days, then six hours hooked up to a machine to filter out the bone marrow stem cells in your blood. Out one arm, in the other. That was it.

“A year later, we talked on the phone. He's a 54-year-old guy from New Hampshire. He had leukemia, but my bone marrow 'took' beautifully and now he's in remission. The first thing he said was, 'Thank you. You saved my life.'”

—MICHAEL SOILEAU

