



2024 CAROLINA WILDERNESS EMS EXTERNS



MD-75: Laura Westneat, MD

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

Laura grew up in Lexington, KY. Her father, an ornithologist, exposed Laura to the outdoors at an early age. She would tag along on his hiking trips and explore the forests and wilderness while he searched the treetops with binoculars for birds.

As a teenager, she attended a survival camp in Ohio and continued her interest in being outside by working as the support staff at an outdoors camp in rural KY, leading rappelling, rock climbing, and hiking for kids of all age groups. She traveled to Minnesota for her undergraduate education, where she became scuba diving certified in a half-frozen Minnesota lake in mid-April. She then used her scuba diving skills to travel to Australia on a two-month study abroad program learning about marine ecology. It was here that she fell in love with the ocean and began chasing her dream of cage diving with great white sharks. She considered a career in marine biology, however ultimately fell in love with medicine. She couples matched into emergency medicine at UNC Chapel Hill with her partner, Mia MacDonald, a general surgery resident. Since moving from Kentucky, Laura has enjoyed exploring the beauty of North Carolina's mountains and beaches, participating in adventure races and trail races, and finding new bodies of water for her golden retriever to swim in. While she hasn't fulfilled her dream of diving with great whites yet, she has enjoyed taking frequent trips abroad to scuba dive in places like Belize, Thailand, the Caribbean, and Hawaii. She plans to combine her love of the outdoors with medicine and will be pursuing a wilderness medicine fellowship after residency.



MD-76: Bret Naanep, MSIV

University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago, IL

Bret grew up in Chicago, Illinois, a place not known for its amazing access to the outdoors. Despite this, he developed an interest in the outdoors after attending the high school lake ecology research program in high school at the Shedd Aquarium, where he backpacked for the very first time in the Apostle Islands of Wisconsin. This was his first taste of the outdoors that would turn into an obsession. Bret attended the University of Loyola Chicago, where he earned a degree in Molecular Biology and Molecular Neuroscience. During his time at Loyola, Bret earned his wilderness first responder certification as well as participated as an outdoor education instructor for Loyola's outdoor exposure program. Bret would also discover a love of rock climbing in college that would lead him to start venturing outside of Chicago to climb on real rock. Bret also obtained an EMT license while an undergraduate. He worked as an EMT at Lifeline Ambulance for two years, responding to emergencies throughout the city of Chicago. After college, Bret spent two-months backpacking across the Pacific Crest Trail, which furthered his interest in medicine as well as search and rescue as he experienced emergencies in the backcountry. Pursuing medicine at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago, he became vice president of the Wilderness Medicine Interest Group where he helped develop outdoor emergency simulations for students to learn about treating patients in the backcountry. Bret also helped establish the emergency medicine pre-clinical exposure program (EMPEX) to give early Emergency Department exposure to 1st and 2nd year medical students. In his free time, Bret enjoys rock climbing indoors and outside, training for long-distance races, and walking his dog by Lake Michigan. Bret looks forward to pursuing a career in emergency medicine with hopes of a wilderness medicine fellowship in the future.