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The Smith Foundation Works to Educate a Future Doctor

The Leon G. Smith Infectious Diseases Foundation has inspired and helped many people but Dr. Smith's latest helping hand is a truly unique story. His dedication and generosity has recently had an impact not on a patient – but a future doctor.

Joseph Fritzky was inspired to pursue a medical profession after his family's experience during his father's rare illness. Joe's father, Rich Fritzky, is renowned in Northern New Jersey as former head of the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce. One day, Rich felt he was coming down with the flu and became very ill. After being rushed to the hospital, Rich was placed into a medically-induced coma in an attempt to save his life.

It turned out that Rich had a rare disease called Neisseria Meningitis, which normally claims its victims in the first 24 hours of exposure. After three months, Rich came out of his coma, however he lost both legs and all but one finger to the disease. But Rich kept his faith.

“This was a real tragedy,” explained Dr. Smith. “Rich was a role model . . . a real family man and a person who was always helping others in his role with The Chamber.”



Richard Fritzky in his room at Morristown Memorial Hospital in 2006, with members of his family: from left, Frank, 23; Mr. Fritzky's wife, Maggie; Teresa, 28; Terry, 11; Tom, 20; and Joe, then 18.

Years after his father's illness, his son Joseph is now on his way to becoming a doctor, and was not exaggerating when he referred to Dr. Smith as “The kind of man who makes dreams come true.”

Joe, who now wanted to help people through medicine, found that the cost of medical school was one challenge, and the tough admission requirements was another. That's

when the “Dr. Smith connection” came into play. Rich Fritzky (the father of 12 children) might have suffered from a dreaded disease, but he is was smart enough to reach out to an old friend, Anthony Scardino, from his days at The

Chamber. When Scardino could not help Joe’s son Rich with the local medical schools, he turned to Dr. Smith.

Scardino introduced Joe to Dr. Leon Smith. Dr. Smith urged Joe to apply to Saint George’s University, to which he was quickly accepted. With Dr. Smith’s help, Saint George’s and The Hackensack University Medical Center worked together to allow for a full scholarship for Joe to attend medical school.



Dr. Leon G. Smith

Joe had found a way to a dream that seemed impossible. “In a society where those who are less fortunate financially are often forced to give up on a dream,” Joe explained. “Dr. Smith, along with Mr. Scardino, provided a path for me to fulfill my aspirations.”

Joe has been working hard to thank them. Out of nearly 800 students, Joseph Fritzky is the only one who received a grade of 100 in Biochemistry. Approaching the end of the first semester, many students had an average grade in the low 70’s, while Joe maintains a 94.5 GPA.

“The best way I can thank Dr. Leon Smith for having faith in me is by succeeding,” said Joe. And Dr. Smith is proud that his Foundation has once again helped a deserving person.

“I am really proud of this Fritzky kid,” Dr. Smith said. “His father has shown great courage fighting all of his medical challenges and I know his son will become a very special doctor.”