



ALPHA RHO ALUMNI CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Featured in this Issue
Alumni Spotlight



Alpha Rho supporting Eric South and the inaugural Gladiator Project Fall Classic charity golf scramble in Nashville.

**SPRING ALUMNI WEEKEND
INFORMATION
COMING SOON!**



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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT - ERIC SOUTH, AP 423

Brothers and Friends of Alpha Rho,

We're pleased to bring you a very special addition to our Alumni Newsletter. We had the opportunity to interview our own Eric South, AP 423, and are pleased to spotlight him. His story is one that will inspire you, give you some perspective on life, and demonstrate the importance of family and the value of our Brotherhood in good and challenging times. Close to 25 Alpha Rho Alumni Members were with Eric and his wife Leslie in Nashville a few weeks ago to support his efforts in serving others. After you read this, we hope you'll consider supporting Eric and Leslie and their amazing foundation the Gladiator Project. To learn more and how you can help, visit <https://www.gladiatorproject.org/>. The Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter is proud to call Brother South one of ours.

Please tell us a little about you and your family.

Eric South - 43, Regional Vice President at Robert Half, WVU Alum (1996-2004); Leslie South - 38, Deputy General Counsel at Tennessee Department of Transportation; Charlie South - 9 years old (3rd grade); and Marshall South - 7 years old (1st grade).

Leslie and I met in January 2005 as interns in the Office of Governor Phil Bredesen in Nashville, TN. We live in Williamson County in the suburbs of Nashville. Leslie is from Nashville originally. In the summer of 1997, between my freshman and sophomore years at WVU, I visited Nashville for the first time for a summer job for the Nashville-based Southwestern Company and decided I wanted to move back after graduation.

For fun, Leslie and I love to travel. In the past ten years, we have travelled to the Pacific Northwest, Maine, France, Germany (Oktoberfest!), Scotland (yes, I got to play the Old Course at St. Andrews!), and Southeast Asia, just to name a few, and we have upcoming trips to Montana and to Italy in early 2022.

When not traveling, we are working parents shuttling back and forth between baseball, flag football, and Scouts with commitments nearly every day of the week. The boys definitely keep us busy!

Describe the circumstances around your diagnosis. What was your mindset after you learned of the diagnosis and how you and your family handled it?

In February 2021, I suddenly started having severe headaches, and within about two weeks I went from headaches, to an MRI, to a craniotomy to remove the tumor, to a diagnosis of grade IV Glioblastoma Multiforme (GBM). GBM is an extremely aggressive brain cancer with an average life expectancy of 12-18 months for which there is no cure. My rock star neurosurgeon not only motivated me pre-surgery to fight like a gladiator, but he also was able to successfully

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GLADIATOR (continued from page 1)

perform a gross total resection, removing 99.99% of the tentacle-like tumor.

After successful surgery in Nashville, we were fortunate enough to be accepted into a clinical trial involving a combination of radiation and chemotherapy with the Oncology Team at the Brain and Spine Center at MD Anderson in Houston, Texas. The clinical trial aligned specifically with the genetic markers of my tumor, allowing for a more customized, cutting-edge approach to treatment.

What was the Genesis of the Gladiator Project? What were/are you trying to accomplish with the formation and work for it? Where are you in terms of seeing the results of your work impacting others?

When I woke up in the neuro ICU after a successful 4-hour brain surgery, laying in the hospital bed, the haze that I had been living with for the past two weeks was gone and the next steps were clear: I was going to fight like hell and beat this thing, I was going to shoot a round of golf in the 70s (which I haven't done yet!), and we were going to start the Gladiator Project to help support patients and families with the same diagnosis and fund research to find a cure for this horrific disease.



Our mission is to use funds raised to fund research for a cure and to support GBM patients and their families as they navigate this journey. Gladiator Project was incorporated in May 2021, and we have raised nearly \$100,000 this year. The Gladiator Project Board of Directors has meetings scheduled soon with patient advocacy and clinical research organizations to determine the most impactful way for us to meet the goals of our mission. We are hoping to see initial funds being disbursed in early 2022.

You could have chosen to look inward and rightfully taken a more introspective approach to the circumstances you and your family find yourself in. Yet you intentionally chose to help others who find themselves in similar circumstances to you? Why was this important for you and Leslie to do? Has helping others impacted the way that you approach your own treatment? If so, how?

Leslie and I discovered early on in the process that the standard of care for GBM patients has gone unchanged for many years and the prognosis is bleak. I made a decision early on that the standard of care was not the route for me. We then interviewed neuro oncologists across the country at reputable facilities such as Vanderbilt, Sloan Kettering, and MD Anderson, to name a few. It became abundantly clear that identifying and being accepted into a clinical trial is extremely difficult under the circumstances. And it was also apparent that funding for research is severely lacking. This only strengthened our resolve and reinforced the Gladiator Project mission.

After Gladiator Project received local and nationwide media attention through several different outlets, the abundance of outreach from donors, supporters, and families afflicted with the same diagnosis was tremendous. We

heard heart wrenching stories of families suffering with GBM, and heartwarming stories of long-term GBM gladiator survivors that have gone largely unrecognized. Hearing these stories has motivated us to continue this fight not only through Gladiator Project, but also with my own treatment options.



How has your diagnosis and treatment impacted your outlook on life in general? What motivates you to keep moving forward, even in the most difficult days? What are you most looking forward to in the future?

There are two mantras that I have lived by in my life and professional career that have helped me throughout my journey: The Standard is The Standard, and Make a Plan and Execute the Plan.

Although I still live by these tenets today, a third priority has moved to the top of my list: taking time for yourself and your family. Live in the moment, experience life, do what you enjoy, and find a purpose that serves you and serves others.

(see ERIC SOUTH on page 3)

ΟΥΔΕΝ ΔΙΑΣΠΑΣΕΙ ΗΜΑΣ
“Nothing shall ever tear us asunder.”



Old School - Brother Eric South shared some fun pics from Morgantown.

The Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter would like to wish you and yours the happiest holiday season!



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ERIC SOUTH (continued from page 2)

I have always been an optimist and I have found that having a positive outlook not only benefits me physically, mentally, and spiritually, but it also positively impacts others as well. This is what keeps me moving forward.

As you know, two of the hallmark values of our Fraternity are leadership and serving others. During your diagnosis and treatment, have you had time to reflect on the parallels to what you're doing in taking a leadership role and serving others with the Gladiator Project and our values as Pi Kapps?

The value I see as most closely aligned with the founding and mission of Gladiator Project is Responsible Citizenship: the duty to lead and the privilege to serve others in order to better the world around you. My work with Gladiator Project motivates me every day as we fight to help all those who have been impacted by GBM.

As I reflect and look back on all seven values of Pi Kappa Phi, I can't help but feel that I have failed to live up to some of the commitments that I made all these years ago. But even as I have fallen short in so many ways, as we all do, my Brothers have been there to lift me up and support me during my current battle and through many other crossroads in my life.

Have you been in contact with our Brothers during this time? If so, what has it meant to you and your family? Has your perspective on our Brotherhood changed at all since you learned of your diagnosis?

Absolutely! Though I have remained in contact with many of my Brothers over the past twenty-five years, the outpouring of love and support over the past 9 months has been especially remarkable. Three members of the Gladiator Project Board of Directors are Brothers in Pi Kappa Phi (Robert Gayda, Ben Hanko, and Sean Cook), and over twenty Brothers from across the country came to Nashville to show their support at the inaugural Gladiator Project Fall Classic charity golf scramble in November 2021! We are looking forward to seeing everyone again at the Gladiator Project Spring Classic charity golf tournament on June 27, 2022 at Plainfield Country Club in Edison, NJ!

There will be a lot of our Members who will be reading this who weren't in school with you, including Student Members. Is there anything you would want to share with them in terms of advice, your personal Journey in Pi Kappa Phi, or anything else you can think of?

The bonds of Brotherhood are truly eternal. Cherish your time as undergraduates and be diligent in your efforts to build and strengthen those bonds while on campus and as you move into your personal and professional lives.

Strive for greatness, expose your weaknesses, be vulnerable, serve others, and lean on your Brothers when needed.