

Lovington student set winning scholarship as his goal Bridgforth couldn't say no to OU

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following story is the fifth in a series about past recipients of Maddox scholarships.*

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NEWS-SUN

Chase Bridgforth was accepted at Notre Dame and considered playing football at Princeton, but it was the familiarity of Oklahoma that won him over.

Bridgforth is the 2003 Maddox Foundation Distinguished Scholar. A 2004 graduate of Lovington High School, he attended the University of Oklahoma where he earned a degree in business entrepreneurship in 2008.

The Maddox Foundation Distinguished Scholarship is a full ride scholarship awarded the summer before a student's senior year that pays for tuition, housing and fees at the college of their choice.

Chief Bridgforth, Chase's father, said his son set a goal of winning the



Maddox Foundation Distinguished Scholar award early in high school and was motivated



Bridgforth

Chase accumulated numerous academic awards, including being named a National Merit Scholar as well as Lovington's valedictorian.

But the Maddox scholarship, Chief said, opened many

doors.

"It was an amazing thing to have to

think you could go anywhere," he said.

Chase applied to — and was accepted by — Notre Dame, but when he visited the OU campus, he felt at home.

"I came up here and just couldn't say no," he said. "I think Oklahoma is a better fit for me than a big city back East."

Norman, Okla., is within driving distance of several family members and allowed him to spend weekends with his grandparents, Chase said.

Having the scholarship meant he would not need to work his way through college, Chase said, which gave him time to participate with the track team.

He threw javelin for four years on the track team. In 2007, Chase led the 2007 Academic All Big 12 Team with a 4.0 grade point average.

Chase said athletics and Oklahoma's similarities to south-

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eastern New Mexico won him over.

"In Oklahoma, you're never far from a dirt road," he said.

Norman did provide challenges, though. Chase said while the overall culture of Oklahoma and OU is similar to Lea County, there were adjustments to a wider variety of people on campus and the track team.

"There were a lot of different experiences and backgrounds," he said. "It kind of puts things in perspective."

While the scholarship did not change which university he attended, Chase said it gave him a better starting position.

"The Maddox Foundation scholarship was a tremendous help," he said. "I don't have the debt now ... I'm able to start my business instead of having to pay for my debt loans."

Growing up in Lea County gave him a strong work ethic and an appreciation for education.

"There was an emphasis, from the time I was very small, in education," he said. "My parents always told me that the doorway to success was education."

He spent his summers working in the oilfields of Lea County or in feedlots.

Chase said his experiences in Lea County, along with the influence from family and friends, propelled him toward a degree in business entrepreneurship.

Since graduation, Chase joined with some college friends to build a new 16,000 square foot indoor gym in Norman. Construction is moving forward on the gym, he said.

In the meantime, Chase is also working for a petroleum engineer. The job brought him to a Lea County site about three weeks ago.

Chief said he is glad Chase chose OU.

"I think he had a great college experience," he said.