## LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

For the Bristers, love for Bulldogs is a family affair

**By Vanessa Beeson** 

IKE BRISTER, '91 POULTRY SCIENCE alumnus, began raising German shepherds before his daughter Makayla was even born. Mike's father gave him his first dog when he was a teenager because the young Brister was interested in becoming a veterinarian. That gift spurred a love of animals that now spans generations with Mike's daughter, Makayla, following in her father's footsteps. Not only does she share his love for animals, she is also a current student in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State.

Makayla is majoring in environmental economics and management in the Department of Agricultural Economics while also majoring in wildlife, fisheries, and aquaculture with a pre-veterinary concentration in the College of Forest Resources. If this weren't enough, she is past-president of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences

(MANRRS) and spent last summer in : however, Makayla's apprehension abated. Washington, D.C. as a Demmer Scholar. She's also an ambassador for the College of Forest Resources and serves on the MSU Student Association's Judicial Council. She's even played trumpet for <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> that, Makayla became more comfortable the Famous Maroon Band and is con- : because she had to be the big sister and sidering trying out again next fall.

When Mike was in college, beyond making extra money as a photographer for the student newspaper, the Reflector, and shooting for the yearbook, he focused mostly on academics. While he was originally on a pre-vet path, when his father died, Mike decided to focus on : the park until she mastered the monkey finishing a poultry science degree so he could immediately enter the workforce.

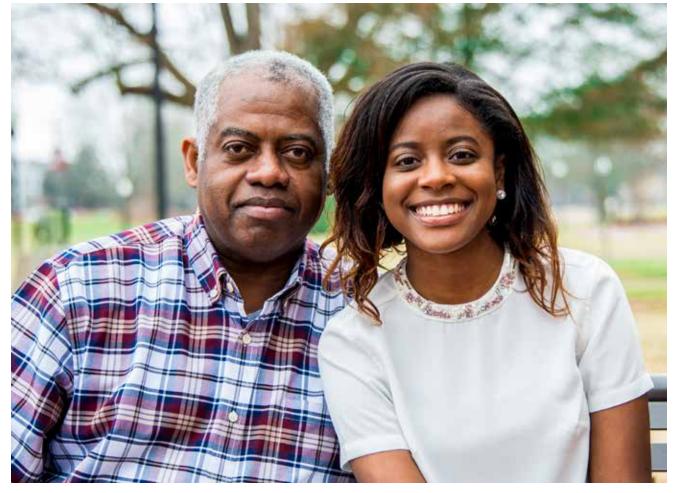
Still the passion for animals was there and he continued to breed German <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> that she thinks can beat her." shepherds, owning a total of fifteen dogs over the decades. Mike said at <sup>1</sup> Mike wanted to make sure Makayla knew first Makayla was a little scared of dogs. : she could go anywhere. That's one of the

"I didn't realize Makayla was apprehensive of dogs until her brother came along, we had a litter the same time Kylan was born and he showed no fear. After couldn't be afraid."

Her father said Makayla's attitude of embracing apprehensions and challenges was evident throughout her formative years.

"I remember a time when she was around five years old. She wouldn't leave bars. She told at the time, 'Dad, this thing can't beat me.' That's been her drive in life. There is nothing she's encountered

When it was time to choose a college, When her younger brother was born, : reasons Mike took a promotion in South



Carolina even though it meant spending : "His love of agriculture influenced me. He : in his head so we decided to call her Mo," time away from his family during the week.

the world was her canvas," said Mike, who has since been promoted to complex HR manager in Carthage, Texas. (He now makes the four-hour commute home every weekend.)

anywhere, she said her search was over when she came to Starkville.

"MSU was on my radar because I'm from Mississippi; my dad came here as well as my uncle. Also, my brother was five years old at the time and was a huge Mississippi State sports fan. When I took the tour, my mind was settled because it felt like home," Makayla said.

She said her father has inspired her along the way.

"Growing up and saying I wanted to be a vet, Dad would always talk to me about his poultry science days," she said. E her and the nickname Itty Bitty popped

always said pick something you love and "I wanted Makayla to understand that it'll never feel like work."

Mike said watching Makayla come into "My wife and I have enjoyed watching The Bristers say they are all huge

her own at Mississippi State has been a joy. how being a part of the campus has made Makayla so well-rounded as an indi-While Makayla knew she could go : vidual," he said. "She's given her brother a different outlook on the possibility of going off to college. Her confidence has taught him how to encounter new people, things, and experiences and learn how to embrace them. She's given us a lot and absolutely filled these four short years." Bulldog fans these days. The family named their most recent edition, a newborn German shepherd, after Morgan William, one of MSU women's basketball stars. "When our puppy was born, she was very small. My brother took one look at

Mike and Makayla Brister on the campus of Mississippi State University. (Photo by Dominique Belcher)

Makayla said.

This summer, Makayla will be studying tropical veterinary medicine and One Health issues in Uganda. The study aboard includes insight into international animal production and health management, disease surveillance, public health systems, and food safety and security under the direction of Margaret Khaitsa, professor in the Department of Pathobiology and Population Medicine in MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine. The course is in collaboration with Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

Makayla plans to graduate in May 2019 and hopes to continue on to veterinary school.