Many siblings would say that they walk in one another’s footsteps, following their lead as a role model. Senior nursing twins Jessica and Stephanie DeMaio have a slightly different dynamic - - they walk side by side. The girls were born on April 5th (Jessica is only 3 minutes older!) and are from Wallingford, Connecticut. Back in high school they had a variety of interests, but eventually both decided to study nursing. The twins share the same passions, drive, and career aspirations.

Drawn by the reputation of the UConn School of Nursing, as well as an offer of university scholarships, the twins decided that UConn and its nursing program were the right places to pursue their undergraduate degrees.

Stephanie said, “It’s important to think about what you want your aim in life to be. For me, it was to live a life of purpose. Nursing is a blend of both science and art that allows me to positively impact and inspire other peoples’ lives.” Jessica agreed, “The nursing profession allowed me to pursue a variety of my skills and interests, such as being creative, caring for others, math, science, and teaching.”

Within the School of Nursing, both have Dr. Michelle Judge as their advisor and they assist Dr. Xiaomei Cong for their honors research project on a neonatal research study. They are specifically looking at the effect of feeding types on the neonatal gut microbiome. This past summer, they travelled together on a Mediterranean cruise for a critical care conference. Outside of the School of Nursing, they room together in the same suite, believing that it works well due to their similar living and study habits, values, and goals. They both enjoy baking, travelling, being creative, and spending time with their family and friends.

In the future, the DeMaio twins see themselves going down the same path. The twins plan to begin working as nurses, and they hope to determine exactly where their true passions lie. The DeMaio twins are interested in working as critical care nurses in a neonatal ICU and eventually pursuing further education.

While the DeMaio twins seem like a carbon copy of each other, even down to their GPAs and friend groups, they do have a few differing hobbies that help them stand out. Jessica taught herself to play acoustic guitar, while Stephanie enjoys researching her family history and trying to discover and preserve old family stories. Stephanie explained, “We don’t intentionally force ourselves to be different, because we are who we are. We just embrace both our similarities and differences. Comparison forces labels on each other, and no one likes to be labeled. We are just two individuals who happen to look alike.” Jessica added, “We motivate each other to be the best versions of ourselves. Although we’re so similar, we’re definitely more competitive with our individual selves than with each other.”

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Research on twins (both identical and fraternal) has found that identical twins are more affected by genes, leading them to follow similar career paths. Stephanie commented on this:

“I think it’s a mix of our genes and the environments we grew up in. But I believe that our similar genetic make-up is the largest influence. We’ve had so many strange twin coincidences where we’ve dreamt the same dreams or thought the same thoughts that I believe are direct results of our DNA and similar brain structures.”

The girls also believe that regardless of both attending UConn together, they would have pursued nursing, showing that their environment probably didn’t have as much of an impact on their interests or skill sets.

All in all, Jessica concluded that “the best part of being a twin is having a best friend who’s always there for you, shares similar interests, and understands you on the deepest level.”