

School District of BELOIT

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December 2021 – Giving Back to the Community that Raised Me

Graduation Day: The Journey Begins

“Travel” with me, for a moment, back to June 7, 2008 – an incredibly hot and humid, sunny day on Jacobson Field. Me and more than 430 peers woke up eager to don our purple graduation caps and gowns, nervous, excited, and (most of all) ready for the big walk across the big stage and into our future. Silly string, beach balls, confetti, and were stashed out-of-sight as we eagerly awaited those final words – “Congratulations to Class of 2008 – We Did It!!”

Graduation day from Beloit Memorial High School (BMHS) is one memory that stays vivid in my mind. You might assume this is because of how eager I was for life’s next step, but quite the contrary. I couldn’t contain the PRIDE I had in being a graduate of BMHS, and was overflowing with gratitude for each opportunity, success, “learning moment,” and memory the School District of Beloit gave me. So many wonderful people in the Beloit community invested time and energy in helping me and my peers be ready for whatever we chose next in life, and I could not wait to return the favor to my community.

Life: The REAL Journey

I didn’t know at the time that I would spend the next ten years on a journey involving starting college, transferring schools, taking longer than planned to earn my Bachelor’s in a field I did not plan on at graduation, moving a few hours from home, marrying my high school sweetheart (BMHS Class of 2007), having our first child, moving back to Beloit, buying a house, having our second child, and working a few different jobs to find my place in the professional world.

My identity lies within all of these aspects of my life – a Beloit native and BMHS graduate, a mother (of a now SBD student – GO TODD TIMBERWOLVES!), a wife, a hard-working professional in the non-profit industry, and a servant leader. It was difficult for me not having found what I felt was the “best” way for me to give back to the community that raised me.

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Finding my Calling

Once I settled into a career in the Beloit community, I quickly found a way to give back. Almost exactly ten years after graduating, I found myself back in the halls of BMHS volunteering as an interviewer for the practice interview program.

To say I fell in love with the impact this program makes is an understatement. As a Human Resources professional, I felt I found the perfect way to give back to the community that raised me – not just “interviewing” students to give real-life experience but co-coordinating the entire program (alongside Rick Barder) and teaching students about resume-building, interviewing, and everything in-between. I was so impressed by the work done to build and sustain the program, and ultimately the positive impact it had in the community, that I NEEDED to be part of it.

Get with the Program

The Practice Interview Program, supported by the Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation (GBEDC), has been positively impacting the lives of students for more than 15 years. This year, for the first time, sophomore students are participating in the program to learn about resume building BEFORE they look for their first job, not after. As we look forward, we are excited about how this program will find its place in the Academy model at BMHS.

Life skills are so important for children to learn as early as possible, and this program plays a small part in ensuring students in our community are better prepared for life ahead. We’ve all heard “it takes a village” – I argue “it takes a community.” Why not support our schools and do all we can as a community to support preparing students for their futures?

This program is always looking for individuals from all industries to volunteer as interviewers and classroom facilitators, so we can continue to reach every student. We are so thankful for the nearly 200 volunteers who dedicate their time and are eager to grow that number!

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My “Why”

So why in the world have I just shared this story with all of you? I firmly believe something in my story can resonate with just about everyone. I am a full-time employee with a big job, a full-time (with mandatory overtime) mom/wife/daughter/sister/friend, and I find time to give back to the community that raised me.

SO much fulfillment comes from the time I spend giving back, even when it feels like there is not enough time in the day or week. I cannot help but take pride in the example giving-back sets for others, most importantly my sons, and am so excited for the time (another ten years from now) when I get to see my sons and their friends go through this program.