

Welcome to Benzie County Central Schools Featured Friday Alumni. Today, we would like to recognize, class of 1994 alumni, Joshua Stoltz. Seriously, when it comes to Josh, we cannot help but think "homegrown" community, no pun intended. Here is an inside look at Josh's success, from a proud Benzie Central graduate, to higher education, onto career exposure and big time travel, and then back to his literal "homegrown roots" as the face of GROW BENZIE. How can you not picture Josh as anything other than a contagious smile, a helping hand, a community staple...

Josh spent his first ten years growing up in downtown Lake Ann and later in the backwoods of Almira Township where he learned to hunt, work in the garden, and stack firewood. By the time he graduated Benzie Central in 1994, his senior resume included three sports, theater, school newspaper, Student Council, Key Club, Science Olympiad and National Honors Society- all while busing tables on the weekends, graduating with honors, and preparing for college at Central Michigan University. Once there, Josh immediately joined intramural sports, started acting, directing and producing shows with CMU television, and hosting the campus' morning radio show. He graduated with his degree in Broadcasting and Cinematic Arts and minored in both Marketing and Advertising.

From there, he moved out West where he shined in the sales and marketing field, eventually opening several of his own companies with over 70 employees throughout Arizona and Florida- all before turning age 30. After taking a short "retirement" of traveling and living in a school bus named "The Future," Josh eventually planted himself back in Benzie County where he was hired by SEEDS After School program. He worked two years as Outreach Coordinator at sites throughout the region, and was Site Coordinator for both Benzie Central Middle and High schools for three years. SEEDS provided an opportunity for Josh to work with youth, rekindle and spark professional relationships in the community, and meld his prior experience in the private sector with the goals of a non-profit organization.

When grant funding expired, Josh was hired as Grow Benzie's first, full-time Executive Director to manage and develop their 4-acre community farmstead and programs. Grow Benzie now includes a state-certified incubator kitchen, 16,000 sq. ft. of hoop houses, sewing and maker-space studios, public garden spaces, a weekly farmers market, a food truck, a 3,000 sq. ft. event center, and after school programs. Grow Benzie has become a community hub of activity for local events, entrepreneur and life skills training, and a food education center offering classes in culinary arts, nutrition, agriculture and food preservation.

and that, is just another shining, homegrown example, of [#OneBENZIE](#).

<https://www.facebook.com/Growbenzie/videos/1119087998113962/>

