

Welcome to Benzie County Central Schools Featured Friday Alumni. Today, we would like to recognize, Benzie Central Class of 1991 Alumni, Kara J. Milliron, MS, CGC, Certified Genetic Counselor at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center. This is Kara's journey as shared with us and the impact Benzie Central teachers had in her success ..We are more than [#OneBenzie](#) proud.

My name is Kara Milliron and I am a proud 1991 graduate of Benzie Central High School. My high school years were a bit different than some, as my beloved mother was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer while I was an 8th grader. She was a warrior through my high school years fighting this disease and my Benzie Central family was very supportive and made high school as normal as they could for me.

For such a small school district, I am always amazed at the teaching excellence that Benzie Central High School offers its students. I am so thankful for my science and math teachers: Mr. Plont, Mr. Lynch, Mr. Block, Mrs. Gardner, and the beloved Mr. Gehring who left us too soon. They fostered my interest in genetics and I am proud to say that I use Algebra every day as the quadratic formula is the basic principle of population genetics. However, I am still amazed that Mr. Block allowed Julie Nugent Bretzke and I to weld in his class for our science project, given my clumsiness.

However, many other teachers imparted their knowledge and made me the person I am today. My love of reading comes from Mr. Kik, my appreciation for history comes from Mr. Sheets, my understanding of government and civics comes from Mr. Siderman, and my ability to finish my typed dictations in rapid time comes from Mr. Blazejeski.

I graduated from Grand Valley State University in 1995 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. I then attended the University of Pittsburgh and was awarded a Master of Science in Genetic Counseling in 1998. Since 1998 I have been the lead genetic counselor in the Breast and Ovarian Cancer Risk Evaluation Program at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center. I was board certified by the American Board of Genetic Counseling in 2002. I work with families that may have an inherited susceptibility to developing breast and/or ovarian cancer. I have participated in over 10,000 adult genetic counseling sessions.

I see patients who may have a cancer diagnosis or a family history of cancer. Most cancer is considered random, or happening by chance. However, about 5-10% of cancers are caused by a gene mutation (change) that has been passed down in the family. I meet with patients undergoing genetic testing to help them understand the test and what the results may mean for themselves and their family. Once the results are received, I help the patient to understand the results, provide emotional support, and discuss recommendations for preventative care, screening recommendations or referrals to support groups or other resources. For my patients who have already been diagnosed with cancer, genetic testing result may influence how the cancer is treated, increase screening for future cancer risk, or patients may consider risk reducing surgery.

If I hadn't had the teachers I had at Benzie Central High School, I truly believe I would never be a genetic counselor. They supported my educational endeavors and for that I am forever grateful.



<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/human-genetics/kara-milliron-ms-cgc>