

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALMUNI. Today we would like to recognize class of 1995 alumni, Heather Bruce (Gray). Heather attended K-6 at Platte River Elementary and 7-12 at Benzie Central High School graduating in 1995 among the TOP TEN in her class. The high school teachers who had the most impact on Heather during that time were Mr. Lynch, Mr. Gehring, and Ms. Belden. To Heather, they all seemed to enjoy what they did, and they treated their students like young adults, rather than children, often forcing students to think outside of the box. Heather played softball while in high school, and was involved in student council, National Honor Society, Key Club, and the inaugural class of BCTV, as well as the Future Problem Solving Program.

After high school, Heather attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, graduating with High Distinction with a Bachelor's Degree in Education in 1999. The highlight of her college career outside of the classroom, was attending the Rose Bowl and watching the Michigan Wolverines win the national football championship in 1997-98. She was able to attend the University of Michigan, due in part, to the generosity of the Benzie Community, as she received the Benzie County Central Schools Educational Foundation Scholarship. While at the University of Michigan, she participated in intramural sports and worked every semester in the UM work-study program. She was also fortunate to work many summers waiting tables at The Cherry Hut in Beulah, where she learned to appreciate hard work as well as how to communicate with people.

After her graduate studies, she then attended law school at Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan, graduating Magna Cum Laude with a Juris Doctorate degree in 2004. While in law school, Heather was on the Law Review and interned with the Michigan Supreme Court.

Heather started her law career in Traverse City in 2004, as an associate in one of the largest law firms in Michigan, where she practiced insurance defense/civil litigation. By that time, she was already married to Kirk Bruce (BCHS class of 1994) and had had her first son. Realizing that the large firm culture and motherhood were not exactly compatible, she decided to start her own law firm in late 2011. What started in early 2012 as a three-person law office is now Swogger, Bruce and Miller Law firm (www.swoggerandbruce.com), with six full-time attorneys and a staff of four. Her practice is now focused on estate planning, probate/trust administration, real estate, and business work. Although she still appreciates a good "lawyer joke", with all joking aside, she cannot think of a better career for herself that combines analytical reasoning, reading and writing, and working closely with clients, often during very difficult times to resolve issues and disputes.

In the past, Heather has served on the Almira Township Planning Commission and has been involved with the local bar association program to provide pro bono legal services at the local Women's Resource Center. Heather has been asked to speak to many local groups, including Benzie County Seniors on the importance of Estate planning. She has also served on the board of the Lake Ann Elementary PTA for the last six years and has coached both of her son's basketball teams.

Her two sons, Fisher (6th grade, BCMS) and Quincy (3rd grade, Lake Ann Elementary) attend school in the Benzie Central district. Her advice to her sons as well as all other Benzie students is to set high goals for yourselves, work hard, ask for help if you need it, and don't let the opinions or judgments of others dictate your happiness or your path in life.

Heather, we are in fact #OneBENZIE proud of your accomplishments, and consider ourselves lucky that you and your family are actively a part of our district. Thank you! You know how Mrs. Crossman feels...like, love and share!

