

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI. Today we would like to recognize Amy Gehring Ph.D., Benzie Central graduate class of 1990.

Amy particularly enjoyed her Science and English classes. Her father was the biology teacher at Benzie Central High School, so Science was always a part of her life growing up. Mr. and Mrs. Lynch also had a big impact on her scientific interests, including her chemistry class. Outside of academics, Amy participated in a variety of activities such as choir, National Honor Society, Key Club, and student council. She was also a statistician for the football team. During her senior year, Amy was the student council treasurer, which meant she was in charge of the stocking the school store with boxes and boxes of candy. I'm guessing you are all too healthy for that kind of thing anymore! Some of her fondest memories of high school were the Close Up trip to Washington DC and her senior class trip to Florida and the Bahamas.

After high school, Amy attended Williams College, a liberal arts college of about 2000 students in western Massachusetts. She became a chemistry major because she liked both the subject matter and working in the lab as well as the collaborative environment of the department with lots of opportunities for close interactions with professors.

After graduating from Williams in 1994, Amy began a graduate program in biochemistry at Harvard University. After growing up in Beulah and attending college in a small town, it was exciting for her to be living and working in the Boston area. Amy studied enzymes from bacteria that can make interesting molecules, such as antibiotics. After earning her Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1998, Amy did postdoctoral research in a different lab at Harvard where she began working with *Streptomyces* bacteria, research that she has continued to this day.

In 2002, Amy returned to Williams College, **but this time as a professor** in the Chemistry Department, where she has worked ever since (<https://chemistry.williams.edu/profile/agehring/>). Amy teaches courses in both introductory chemistry and biochemistry. One of her favorite things about this job is working with students in her lab. Here, they pursue research that blends elements from both her graduate school and postdoctoral research training. She studies soil bacteria, *Streptomyces* (see the picture that she is holding for an electron microscopy image of these), which produce molecules with important applications in medicine such as antibiotics, antifungals and anticancer drugs. The goal of her research is to understand the biochemical details of the organism's life cycle and how this relates to the control of antibiotic production. It is particularly exciting to see students translate their knowledge from coursework into new discoveries in the lab. Amy is thrilled to have a job that allows her to both work with talented students and to pursue her intellectual interests through independent research. Outside of her job, Amy enjoys being with her family, including two daughters in 9th and 6th grade.

Amy works with many beginning college students each year. In terms of advice for students, she urges them to pursue subjects and careers that they find both exciting and challenging. Students sometimes make decisions based on what they think they should do or what they believe other people are expecting of them, which ultimately leaves them

unhappy or unfulfilled. Don't be afraid to go out of your comfort zone and find your passion! Amy has been very lucky that she has found hers through college teaching and research, a career that she never even imagined as a high school student. Amy Gehring, we are in fact #OneBENZIE proud. Congratulations on your successes. We wish your family well, always.

