

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI. Today we would like to recognize class of 1997 Alumni, Victoria Mekas (Mitchell). Victoria graduated from Benzie Central in 1997. While she was in high school, she was a member of FFA, NHS, Academic Letter club, and Key club. FFA played a big role in her future, learning very important life skills, parliamentary procedure, and many things she uses in business today.

Victoria knew from an early age that she wanted to own a flower shop in her hometown that she loves so much. After graduation, she attended MSU for a few years and in 2001 decided to just go for it and opened a flower shop in Beulah. The support from the community was overwhelming! Victoria outgrew her small space in Beulah and moved to the building she had built by her dad (Mitchell Builders) in Benzonia in 2004. When her now husband (Chris Mekas) and her were figuring out moving the shop, they decided it would be a good idea to have something other than just flowers to draw people up the hill. They decided on gourmet ice cream and sorbet. So, they sought out an ice cream and gelato school in North Carolina (just for a few weeks!) and opened Hill Top Soda Shoppe. rBST free, gluten free, and GMO-free dairy, sweetened with Michigan sugar and using as many local ingredients as they can since they opened their doors in 2005! Since then, Benzie Cross Country started a little tradition with coach Moss and the teams (middle and high schools) runs up to the shop at the end of the year to get free ice cream. Victoria and Chris like to believe that they play a part in the cross-country team's success. 😊

In 2013 Victoria and Chris were bored so they decided to open a coffee shop/gift store in Frankfort. Petals and Perks has grown into such a staple for the Frankfort community, open 365 days a year they offer a free community Thanksgiving dinner and a free community Christmas brunch. Offering higher Grounds coffee, flavored syrups made for them in Traverse City (and a couple made in house), soups and baked goods made right on site. Waffles, breakfast sandwiches, real fruit smoothies and Hill Top ice cream, along with Michigan and USA made gifts. Again, they thought they needed a little something else so.....in 2015 they opened Lynn and Perin Mercantile, Co. Lynn and Perin is a gourmet food store on Main Street. Quality food has always been a passion for the Mekas', so you can get specialty vinegars and oils, spices, jams, beer, wine, cheese and countless other gourmet foods and gifts at Lynn and Perin. Victoria loves supporting the community that she grew up in, by offering jobs (26 in the middle of summer), donating, taking part in events, etc. In 2015 Victoria and Chris also introduced Beatrice to the mix of things and hopefully she will take on the love of entrepreneurship like her parents, and might even be a little Benzie Central Husky herself!

[www.hilltopsodashoppe.com](http://www.hilltopsodashoppe.com)

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[www.lynnandperin.com](http://www.lynnandperin.com)

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