

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI.
Today, we would like to recognize class of 1992 graduate, Dr. Shannon (Knudson) Leahy, DDS.

While in high school at Benzie Central, Shannon was involved in band, volleyball, Key Club, and National Honors Society.

After high school, Shannon was awarded academic scholarship to Hope College and from there, transferred to Western Michigan University in 1994. After 3 years of undergraduate studies, Shannon was granted early admission to dental school, simultaneously applying for and receiving the U.S. Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program scholarship, a full-ride to dental school (the program still exists today for those interested in medicine/ dentistry and willing to serve- a fantastic opportunity for those looking to leave school debt-free) and began studies at University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry in 1995. Upon graduation from dental school in 1999 and licensed to practice dentistry, she was assigned to Naval Station Mayport, FL, providing dentistry to military stationed on base or assigned to ships. A year later, Shannon received orders to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and was assigned to a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) with the Marine Service Support Group (MSSG). Forward deployed for six months in 2002, and assigned to the USS Trenton, Shannon then participated in providing dentistry to U.S. Marines aboard ship and to citizens of Djibouti, Africa where access to dental care was practically non-existent. While in Africa, Shannon worked without electricity or running water, and restrooms were... well, interesting. Other missions of the MSSG included building and supplying schools, helping the Djiboutians find fresh, clean sources of drinking water, and providing basic medical care to the civilians. She was fortunate enough to see France, Greece, Spain, and Bahrain while deployed. Truly, God has blessed America- and while she felt fortunate to see life and sights in other places, Shannon was most appreciative to come back home!

Engaged at the time, to her now- husband Kenneth whom was also on the MEU, assigned to another ship. He, too, served as a Navy Dental Officer. After resigning her commission, she and Kenneth eventually moved to the Raleigh, NC area and opened Leahy Family Dentistry in 2007. They have two children, Dominic (12) and Keira (11) and a new pup, Gracie. Shannon has been involved with various community activities, including Junior Woman's Club (leaving to start a women's group at her church with service focus), leading a Children's Dental Health seminar at our local community center, visiting local Kindergarten classrooms to discuss dental health, and most recently joining a mission to Nicaragua through Rotary International which provides dentistry to those without access to care. There, she coordinates with their County Hygienist to help ensure children in our local schools who have dental treatment needs are cared for- targeting those whose parents cannot afford dental treatment but who do not qualify for Medicaid services.

Along the way, she has learned a litany of words of wisdom- but these are absolutes: Shannon has learned to be grateful for blessings in disguise. Top grades are great, but some of the most successful people she has come across are charismatic and possess top interpersonal skills and a willingness to try a new path even though it may lead to failure. Most importantly, you are who you hang out with so be selective about who you call "friend", keeping close to those who inspire you to be your very best and who hold you to a high standard of behavior.

It has been awhile since the Navy has brought Shannon away from Michigan and since she's become a southern transplant. To this day, when she speaks of "home," in her heart, she refers to Benzie County- memories of the cozy towns of Honor, Beulah, and Frankfort all which warm her heart. Shannon is forever thankful for the fantastic education and support she received at Benzie Central, where truly some of the best teachers out there walk your halls and grace your classrooms!

LeahyFamilyDentistry.com

Shannon, Shannon, Shannon...we could just not be more #OneBENZIE proud. What a truly inspiring journey yours has been. Continued success to you.

