

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI. Today we would like to recognize Billie (Grudzien) Hooker, Benzie Central alumni class of 1998.

Billie shared that the late Mr. John Gehring was the reason she discovered and became enamored with the Biological Sciences; citing that his strange enthusiasm for life was contagious. She made mention of her first Biology course at Grand Valley State University being a junior level Genetics course and that she was fully prepared due to the amazing foundation that Mr. Gehring provided.

She too, gave mention of the late Ms. Priscilla Belden as being instrumental in driving her to present herself in a professional manner, and to express herself in the most precise fashion. She commented that Ms. Belden was a stickler for grammar, and that to this day, she still appreciated her influence in her daily life.

Billie graduated from Grand Valley State University with a Bachelor's degree and has taken graduate courses in Cell/Molecular Biotechnology there as well.

Billie married her high school sweetheart, Jo Hooker, also a fellow 1998 Benzie Central graduate. Together, they have two children; Ember (8) and Elliot (5) and a dog; an American Eskimo named Weezie.

Billie enjoys swimming, traveling, visiting the Benzie County area (they hope to purchase property in the area again soon), and painting rocks for the Kindness Rocks Project. She organizes her work's donation of more than 100 toys/games for needy children each Christmas.

If Billie could give one word of general advice, to students and adults alike, it is this, "I have never been 'cool', but I've always been happy. Life will align with your outlook, so stay positive."

Billie is currently a forensic scientist with the Michigan State Police in the Biology/DNA unit. She is an expert in biological fluid identification and DNA analysis. She processes evidence that is associated with a crime and assists law enforcement agencies across the state with their investigations. Billie has qualified as an expert in her field, and has testified in court as such on 50 plus different occasions in many Michigan counties. Billie was instrumental in developing Michigan's sexual assault kit screening procedure. She has also taught several courses in evidence collection and preservation, provided training for law enforcement agencies, attorneys, sexual assault nurse examiners, evidence technicians and students both in college and in high school. Billie add to her accolades, as she is also a member of the Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists.

Billie was also kind enough to lend some career advice. "When you are thinking of breaking into a field, whether it be a trade or specific degree program, make sure you take a look at current job listings. They will lay out what qualifications you are expected to have before you are able to apply for that position. It may not always be what you expect."

Billie, contrary, we think you ARE #OneBENZIE cool. What an amazing path you've chose and we are proud and thankful for your expertise. Continued success to you and your family always.

Yes, you guessed it...Mrs. Crossman says like, love and share!



Billie Hooker

Forensic Scientist

Forensic Science Division

Michigan State Police