

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI. Today, we would like to recognize 2012 alumni, Chase Gray.

Chase graduated from Benzie Central High School in 2012. During his time at Benzie, he was involved in a number of extracurricular activities. He was Vice President of the Student Council, a member of the Key Club, and editor of the Yearbook, a member of the National Honors Society, and he was heavily involved with the after school Drama program. Chase performed in both the fall plays as well as the spring musicals. Chase had also helped to revive BCTV which was long gone by the time he had reached high school. With the help of four other students, Chase was able to open a student-run school store. The store provided school supplies, as well as pieces of screen-printed BCHS themed clothing that was purchased by students and teachers alike. Chase's fondest memories while at Benzie Central, were located inside the walls of Mrs. Christy Case's choir room. He was an active member of the choir program, and it was there where he fostered his love of singing. Thanks to Case's encouragement, Chase began taking private voice lessons every Tuesday after school. He also auditioned for, and was accepted into the MSVMA All-State honors choir. This choir consists of the top 100 high school aged vocalist's in the state of Michigan, which is decided through a 2-month long audition and performance process. He was a member for both his junior, and senior year.

After graduating from BCHS, Chase attended Western Michigan University. There, he received his BFA in Music Theatre Performance. He graduated with honors in 2016. During his time in Kalamazoo, Chase performed parts in plays both on campus, and off. His favorite being the role of Shrek, in *Shrek: The Musical* at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre.

After his time at Western came to an end, Chase booked his first professional theatre contract right here in Michigan! He worked for 5 months as an actor at The Barn Theatre, a historic landmark located in the town of Augusta. The Barn is the largest Professional Equity Theatre in the state of Michigan, and has started the careers of many stage and film actors. This alumni list includes Jennifer Garner, Tom Wopat, and Stephen Lynch just to name a few. This past fall, Chase made the move to New York City to continue his pursuits as a professional actor.

Chase would like to leave current students with this piece of advice: "Embrace what makes you different! It can be SO easy, especially in high school, to want to conform in the hopes of making life less... complicated. But what I've come to realize is that once I learned to love the things that set me apart, I found myself open to amazing opportunities. Authenticity is rewarded in the real world! When you start to live your life for yourself, and no one else, you'll begin to wonder why you even bothered with that whole 'normal' nonsense at all."

Chase we are in fact #OneBENZIE proud of all of your accomplishments. Thank you for sharing your journey with us, and continued success as you embrace the many opportunities and dreams you've worked so hard for. You know the requirement here, Mrs. Crossman says, like, love and share!

