

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOL FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI. Today, we would like to recognize 2013 graduate, Michaela Williams. Michaela was kind enough to share this with us.

"I grew up in Lake Ann and, therefore, attended Lake Ann Elementary from kindergarten through fifth grade. It was there, in the second grade, I decided that I wanted to become a teacher. I was quite shy in sixth grade, being surrounded by sixth graders from the entire district. However, in middle school, I met the most wonderful friend group. I partially credit them for where I am today (seriously, surround yourself with lifelong friends of various strengths and abilities, who care about you, and want you to succeed!).

In high school, softball took up much of my focus. I was on varsity for four years and a captain for three. I also was credited with All Conference and All District awards for pitching. During school hours, I was the secretary of NHS and I participated in Teacher Academy. In Teacher Academy, I was able to go to each elementary school throughout my two years (except I did not make it to Betsie Valley). In high school, I also began working at JoMo's Ice Cream Shop in Honor, where I have been working for the past 8 summers. I always tell my boss that I will be there for the rest of my life because I am going to be a teacher with summers free (little do they know, I am not joking!).

After graduating Benzie Central in 2013, I journeyed down to Mt. Pleasant to attend Central Michigan University. There, I met my best friend (my roommate!) and we lived together for the next four years. Going to a "big" school after attending Benzie was a bit of a change for me. I was used to knowing every single person in the school and I had always felt comfortable going to any of my high school teachers for help (or just to chat). My first year at CMU, it seemed *huge* and it was easy to feel small. My professors seemed intimidating and I had classes in lecture halls. However, I stuck with it and ended up loving it! I have professors that I am still in contact with, I was able to take American Sign Language classes (a goal of mine since about fifth grade), and I found my niche in Kappa Delta Pi. Kappa Delta Pi is an honor society specifically for teachers. I was able to be the treasurer of the organization for two years and I made friends that have lasted much longer than that.

CMU also gave me the ability to travel abroad. Small-town-Michaela, who had *never* been on a plane, packed a carry-on and flew to Ireland to pre-student teach. It is, easily, one of my favorite experiences to date. I lived with a family and another CMU student and we would walk to school, help out in classrooms all day, then walk to the train station, take the train to a random stop, and hike the bluffs all evening! (Also, if you were wondering, it is indeed *super* green there!) Coincidentally, one of my middle/high school best friends was also over in Europe with the University of Michigan at the same time and our trips ended within a day of each other. Naturally, we planned to extend our trips and travel together. We discovered that Barcelona, Spain was a bit too city and big for us, but still beautiful, that Santorini, Greece was ten times more gorgeous than any picture makes it look (also, if you go to Greece: ride the donkeys!). In addition, that Venice, Italy is the perfect location for two girls who love to walk, talk, drink coffee, and eat pasta (we also slept under a table in the Venice airport...that's another story).

In the fall of 2017, I finished my college career by student teaching at Betsie Valley. I love that I went full circle in my education. I started school at Benzie, and I finished school at Benzie! I had an incredible student teaching experience. I student taught in the fifth grade with a great group of students. After graduating in December, I began to make Benzie my own home. I moved into my own (adorably quirky) apartment and I accepted a long-term sub position in first grade at Betsie Valley for the remainder of

the year. I loved staying at the Valley. Its staff is one of a kind and they taught me much more than four years of college did (no offense to college, I'm just trying to put into perspective *how much* I learned in the course of a year). I spent the spring learning to teach first graders and *that* was a much bigger adventure than anything I did in Europe! My students were a very special group and will forever hold a place in my heart.

You can now find me scooping ice cream, coaching middle school and summer league softball teams, playing (and losing) euchre with my friends, cuddling babies in the infant room at church, on a ball field playing slow pitch softball, "Pinteresting" teacher things, or doing anything else that makes me happy.

My best advice to anyone reading this is that *you* get to create your own life. Make decisions that get you to where you want to be, take opportunities that presented to you, use failures to grow and learn from, and most importantly, embrace where you are from. Benzie has a lot to offer, you just have to put forth the effort to access it!

P.S. If anyone has any teacher tips, please send any and all of them my way!"

Michaela, we are in fact #OneBENZIE proud of all of your accomplishments. Continued success and happiness to you! You know how Mrs. Crossman feels....like, love and share!

