

WELCOME TO BENZIE COUNTY CENTRAL SCHOOLS FEATURED FRIDAY ALUMNI. Today, we would like to recognize Jason Sheffer M.B.A., Class of 2002. Jason was so very kind to share his journey with us. He speaks highly of his time at Benzie Central, and we could not be more proud of this alumnus. Jason, shared this, "Throughout life, events and interactions help form your values, attitudes and beliefs (VABs). VABs are shaped in your early childhood by your family, friends, classmates and close role models. I attended Benzie County Central Schools my entire life. From my first day of stepping on the bus for young 5's to my last day as a senior, I always felt that I formed relationships with individuals that wanted me to be successful. Some of my best memories at Benzie were when things were challenging. The challenges I was presented with could have been trying to learn a second language, preparing for a test or trying to make it to the state finals in a sport. The reason why I feel these were my best memories, of all the events above, is because I never felt alone. There was always someone I could lean on, whether that be a friend, advisor, teacher or even a community member. My parents always told me to invest relationships that matter and always assume positive intent, this was also true about the individuals above.

I attended Platte River Elementary School, which I thought was one of the best schools I have ever been to. To this day, I still think this as my kids are in elementary school. Platte River Elementary is my benchmark. The teachers, Principal (Mr. Brougham) and even the Janitor (Randy Knapp) made everyone believe they mattered. When I look back, I was being prepared to be my best self by each of these relationships. A few of my fondest memories are working for red hot candies (a.k.a. 3rd Grade Mr. Misner's class), sledding down the hill on my roll up red sled, or getting on the bus to go skiing at Crystal Mountain after school. When I think back, I reflect on Ms. Wilcox as one of my favorite teachers because she was able to watch my class grow since she was our kindergarten teacher and later our 6th grade teacher. Later she would check up on me during high school, which made me feel valued.

All of this happened before I was old enough to attend Benzie Central High School. I could not wait to get to Junior High where the "Big Gym" was at! While I was in high school, I ran cross country and track and field. Cross country was my life. I was not the best but I was competitive. My coach, Elden "Pete" Moss, once stated in a newspaper that I ran like Charlie Chaplin.... I really did not know who that was, so I used AOL dial-up to look that up. While I never won the Golden Mile at the Cherry Festival I did lead most of the way. I came in second twice and would have won this year (2018) by 20 seconds if I ran as I could back in the day. I tried to play basketball, and honestly.... I was horrible at it. Although it was a challenge for me, it kept me in shape. I was also involved in Key Club, the 4H extension, and numerous volunteer activities. One program board that I really enjoyed was Saturday Night Jive that I co-chaired with Morgan Feger. Saturday Night Jive was a bi-weekly program sponsored by the MSU extension office for high schoolers.

As high school was coming to an end, I always knew I wanted to be like some of my favorite teachers. I have named a few, but some of my other role models were Mr. (Kevin) Kennedy (gave most of my close friends and I nicknames - mine was "ShefDogg"), Mr. Pallin, Mr. Waterson, Mr. Gehring and Mr. Blazejewski, Mr. (Blair) Moss, Mr. Kubit, Mr. Carter and Mrs. (Cheryl) Smith.

After I graduated from Benzie in 2002, I attended Central Michigan University. In my first biology class at CMU, I could not believe we were covering the same material covered in Mrs. Huddleston's / Mr. Blooms class in 7/8th Grade. That was one of the best feelings I could have experienced as a freshman; I was prepared for a college course, even though my school district was small. I started pursuing a degree in education since I wanted to be like my role-models. I wanted to become a high school teacher. Through the 5 years I was at CMU, I explored several different majors and ended up falling into a career that I could combine all my school experiences together and be very successful in the healthcare field. In 2007, I earned my Bachelor of Science in Health Administration with a minor in Community Health from CMU. To this day, I am able to represent CMU by sitting on the Health Administration Division Advisory Council that advises the Health Administration program.

During my time at CMU, I was a full-time student with a full-time job; I worked at a restaurant so I could graduate with no student debt. In the summers, I worked for Elmer's Crane and Dozer to save up money to pay that *lovely* tuition bill. Even though I worked full time, I was still able to meet some of my best friends and my wife at CMU.

On my very first day at CMU, during Welcome Weekend, I met my amazing wife, Amanda. It took two years to win her heart, but it was well worth it. After we were married, we traveled throughout the United States before starting our family. We have two sets of twins – Emily and Ethan, who are 7 years old, and Troy and Trent, who are 4 years old. We also have a baby due in October, but just ONE baby this time. As a family, we enjoy going to festivals all over Michigan. My kids really like animals, so we also spend a lot of time at zoos. We have made several trips to Disney World as a family.

After I graduated from CMU, I started working at MidMichigan Health (Headquartered in Midland, MI) as a Benefit Coordinator for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Through this opportunity, I was able to network with many people within the organization, which led me to be the second corporate employee in the company as a Business Technical Coordinator in the Human Resources department. After spending a few years traveling to all of the subsidiaries, my goal was to standardize technology for all employees and train leaders on these technologies. My next role was to do the training and change management design of MidMichigan Health's first electronic medical record system, Cerner. I worked for a leader similar to the teachers I had at Benzie. Lynn Bruchhof guided me to use my strengths and made me a true change agent in this role. I am forever grateful to her. I was also able to find time to achieve my Masters of Business Administration from the DeVos Graduate School at Northwood University in 2012.

With a lot of effort, I was able to create a Corporate Organizational Development and Training Department with my director, after the Cerner project ended. Subsequently, I worked as an Education Specialist and led the learning technology strategy for the entire organization. Quickly, I was promoted to Supervisor. I was able to practice management with a group of eight direct reports. During this time, I was able to secure a Herbert H. Dow and Grace H. Dow grant for \$1.5 million to start a program for clinical excellence in nursing and provider education. This ended up turning in to a \$3 million simulation center in one of our brand new buildings. The amazing thing about the company I work for is that the

culture is very similar to the one I experienced at Benzie. My co-workers and leaders are teachers. When my director left for career advancement, I was appointed to my current role due to the prior experiences that prepared me to hit the ground running.

As the Corporate Director of Organizational Development and Training, I am responsible for and oversee cultural integration of new subsidiaries, employee engagement, leadership development, clinical education, simulation centers, clinical certifications, a nurse residency program and several Magnet hospital initiatives. This job spans 23 counties and 8000 employees, providers and volunteers. There are over 35 nurses, therapists, professionals, technology specialists and trainers I collaborate with daily. I am also the Director of our American Heart Association Training center which has 99 instructors that report through this function. In the Organizational Development Director role, MidMichigan Health has received national recognition in multiple different categories, with our latest one being a top three nomination for Cornerstone OnDemand's RAVE award (Learning Strategy Innovation). Out of 3200 companies in 22 different industry sectors, the strategies that I spearheaded were among the best of the best in 2018. These nominations and recognitions have allowed me to travel to national events to speak about my experiences and knowledge.

I am a Fellow Candidate with the American College of Healthcare Executives, STEM advisory council member at several high schools in Midland County, Chamber of Commerce Young Professional Board Member, elected board member of the Board of the American Health Council, technology reviewer for KLAS, SHRM Member, CMU Site Preceptor for Health Administration, Talent and Development member and am involved in many other national and regional programs. On top of all that, I am also the owner of a small lawn care business that I started to help pay off debt from my master's degree.

In summary, I feel that way I lead, parent my children and actively participate in the community were developed and practiced at "MY Benzie." My Benzie shaped my values, attitudes and beliefs to make me my best self. I really could not have had a better experience than what I had at Benzie County Central Schools."

Jason, we are in fact #OneBENZIE proud. Continued success to you and your family always. You know how Mrs. Crossman feels...like, love, and share!



