

Interviews with Alumni

A recent English class was given the assignment to interview Chelsea Alumni. Here are a few of their stories...

The High School Rebel

By Andrea Neville

My sister, Samantha LeBaigue, was not the everyday Chelsea High School student. Graduating in 2008 with a class of eighteen students, she was probably the most rebellious. Sam started high school at Chelsea Public School with the mindset of “people can’t tell me what to do!” She skipped classes, got in trouble a lot, and didn’t take school seriously. In need of a change, she switched schools for her sophomore year and gave Williamstown a whirl. Sam came back to Chelsea for most of her junior year, and this time she had a different outlook. Sam connected with teachers and enjoyed school a little more than she did during the first part of her high school career. Sam graduated with honors which surprised her, but not those who knew her and knew she could do whatever she put her mind to do. Now Sam is working a full time job and has plans of eventually furthering her education. The strongest memory she has from high school is when a fellow classmate got into a car accident that paralyzed her. Sam’s whole class united and came together as one. Without all the support she got from teacher’s Sam may not have stayed at Chelsea or made it through school. DeRoss Kellog gave Sam the inspiration to keep going from sixth grade on. Mrs. Valz/Slingerland, and Ms. Brown were always there for her, they would listen to what she had to say and encouraged her to keep going. Without Barrett Williams she would have gotten in a lot more trouble than she did, she said that he was the only one who could put her in her place without making her temper go. Joan Feirabend taught Sam a lesson that helps her with her everyday life; Joan taught her not to judge people, that everyone is creative in their own way and that labels are unnecessary. All of these teachers taught Sam that for her to get anywhere in life she had to graduate. Even though Sam’s high school experience was a little bit rocky she graduated, and learned a lesson that she will keep dear to her heart forever.

A Fun High School Experience

By Courtney Griffen

I’m walking into the living room of my house and I see my mom sitting in her chair doing a word search. I look around the room and I see a lot of pictures of my sister, my brother and myself. I see a picture of my baby cousin Blake, and a picture of my cousin Alex, my cousin Katelyn, and my Aunt Ree. Alex graduated from Chelsea Public School in 2006, and Katelyn is currently a freshman at Chelsea. My Aunt Ree, also known as Judith, went to Chelsea Public School up until her senior year, my Uncle Larry and

our family friend Arthur Roy graduated from Chelsea in 1986. I sit down on the floor in front of the coffee table where my mom is. She graduated in the class of 1985 with a class of about 20 students. Once I'm sitting I smile up at her.

Courtney- So Mom, describe your high school experience at Chelsea Public School.

Nancy- It was fun and relaxed, everyone knew who everyone was, the classes were small and interesting, and we had plenty of independence and freedom during breaks and lunch.

Courtney- What kind of student were you in high school?

Nancy- I got pretty good grades but missed a lot of school during the first three years. I followed the rules, got along with everyone, was not mean to anyone, and behaved in general when I was there.

Courtney- How would you describe your life now?

Nancy- Full, hectic, good, busy as a divorced mother of three children ranging from nine to sixteen.

Courtney - What is one memory (or two) that stands out from your high school experience at Chelsea Public School?

Nancy- Hanging out in the common during lunch time after we got back from over street, talking or playing Frisbee, spending study hall (the ones in the library) talking to friends and the study hall teacher, getting their help and input on any work, sharing ideas.

Courtney- What would you feel Chelsea Public School has given you that has helped you in your life?

Nancy- A calm, peaceful, fun high school experience (much less stressful than the bigger schools) and an education to use throughout the rest of my life.

Courtney- Do you have anything else you would like to share about your experience at Chelsea Public School?

Nancy- That I enjoyed it and hope my child has an even better time.

Hearing all this from my mom makes me think that I actually can succeed with my high school experience just like my mom and actually do something big with my life. My mom has inspired me because even though she doesn't work for a big company she still is a single mother of three kids who love her very much and give her the support she needs to move on in life. Right now my mom is supporting me with my education so I can finish my high school years.

High School Again

By Anthony Spinella

It's a warm Sunday in January and both Joseph Spinella and I sit down at a small dining room table. Joseph Spinella is a Chelsea alumnus and graduated in 1978 from the Chelsea High School. He's also my dad. I've known him all my life right up to now in my freshmen year in high school. It's time for me to find out about his experience as a high school student at Chelsea.

Anthony: Ok so... the interview is about your high school years at Chelsea and yeah you went there for pretty much all of high school.

Joseph: All four years of it.

Anthony: Yep, so how would you describe your high school experience at Chelsea Public School?

Joseph: I think that my high school experience at Chelsea Public School was umm... it was active because there were a lot of opportunities for me to participate in things non- athletic. I was able to participate in one act plays, contests, and the annual three act play. I was able to participate in the FFA club (Future Farmers of America). And I was also in debate and forensics so there were a lot of extra-curricular activities for me to do that were not athletic.

Anthony: Sounds like there was a lot more than there is now... 2nd Question... What kind of student were you in high school?

Joseph: At the time there were two tracks and I took the college prep track so it separated me somewhat from the kids I had been in eighth grade with at Chelsea. But the influx of new students from Tunbridge and Washington made larger class sizes and you met new people that way. This is similar to what happens today.

Anthony: Uhhh hm

Joseph: One of the major events that happened in my senior year was moving in to the new school. The new school was built in my junior year through the fall of my senior year and we got to move in at mid-year I guess. So I got to spend half my senior year in a brand new school.

Anthony: What are one or two memories that stand out during your high school experience at Chelsea Public School other than moving into the new building?

Joseph: During that time there were some teachers who wanted to provide outside of the school experiences. And so in the drama club we went to NYC to see a play, and spent the night in NYC, actually we saw a couple plays. Think we saw a Broadway play and we saw... trying to think of it... wonder if this group is still around, does performance art...

Anthony: Blue Man Group?

Joseph: No not Blue Man Group. But I think it was Mumanchance. And our social studies group, Ron Eberhardt took us to Boston spent an overnight there and toured around Boston. Then I got to travel a

lot with the FFA Future Farmers of America organization. And I was State Secretary of the FFA my senior year of high school

Anthony: State Secretary?

Joseph: Yes I was elected to the State Secretary position. So those experiences outside of the classroom were as important as inside. Oh also we went to Quebec with the French Club.

Anthony: What do you feel Chelsea High School has given you that has helped you in your life?

Joseph: The FFA and the debate and forensics helped me with public speaking and broadened my horizons in that way. Also I think that small school environment, where students and teachers form personal relationships, was positive for me and so I wanted to come back here for my children to have that experience.

Anthony: Do you have anything else that you would like to share about your experience at Chelsea Public School?

Joseph: One of the things I missed out on in high school was they cut art from the budget for several years at my school. And I regret that I wasn't able to have that experience in high school. Because I like do arts and crafts and other stuff.

Anthony: So how would you describe your life now?

Joseph: My life now is filled with my family and children my career and community service.

Anthony: So pretty good?

Joseph: (laughs) Yes very good.

Anthony: Sounds like you had a good time at Chelsea High School

Joseph: It was good. It was hard work but I was an average student.

And with that the interview, the gateway into the teenager Joseph used to be, is over. I thank him for the interview and we proceed to make pizza dough and get ready to go skiing. Joseph is currently living in Chelsea, Vermont and teaches fourth grade at Hanover Street School. He has led a wonderful and successful life after graduating from our small school at Chelsea.

Set Goals, Get Goals

By Sam Amber

I emailed my sister Grace last weekend, to try to understand how she did so well at Chelsea, and how she continues to excel socially, academically, and athletically at Oberlin, the school in Ohio where

she goes to college. Grace, over her four high school years, attended four schools. In her freshman and half of her junior year, she went to Chelsea, in sophomore year, she went to Spaulding to play hockey, and to see what going to a big school was like, but she came back for half a year, and then went to the Mountain School for a semester. And finally, for senior year, she was accepted into the VAST program, meaning she has had to do no math at Oberlin. She earned a place in the National Honor Society and graduated in 2009 as a salutatorian of her class. I thought that attending all of these schools would give her a lot of perspective about our school, and it did. Here are the questions I asked her, and her (well worded) responses.

What are your fondest memories of Chelsea School?

“First thing that comes to mind is the winter carnival. Up comes a montage of three-legged-races with Robyn Kennedy, our life-size Jaws snow sculpture from 7th grade, and years of pie-eating contests. Also, potato bar day. That was always a good day.”

How does Chelsea compare to the other schools you’ve been to?

“Chelsea has phenomenal school spirit. The school and community does a great job supporting the sports teams. The amount of Chelsea “swag” worn in the school is proof (championship jackets, Chelsea sweats, Rec. camp tees, etc.). I definitely miss playing sports at Chelsea.”

How has going to Chelsea helped your life now?

“The most direct impact I can see is in my current relationships with professors. Where other students are often intimidated and awkward around professors, I am used to more personal interactions. Since I am used to teachers at Chelsea knowing me outside the classroom, I expect the same from Oberlin College professors. This has allowed me to make more meaningful connections with my professors than most students.”

How would you describe your life now?

“Stimulating. I’m a Visual Arts major with a focus on politics at Oberlin College. I’m still playing lacrosse and I’m on the student senate. I live in Keep Cooperative, a big house with a group of 45 college students, who somehow manage to clean and cook for themselves. I get fed, sometimes. There is always somebody to talk to, or a lecture, concert, play, art show, etc. to attend, but also always a dozen things I should be doing instead.”

What did you do to excel in academics at Chelsea?

“‘Set goals, get goals.’ (lame quote, but seemed relevant)”

Overall, being at many schools gave Grace a good perspective on things, but she always had her little school and town to keep her grounded to earth. The concept of setting goals has obviously helped her academics and athletics. She always got good grades in school through her perseverance, and led

Chelsea to an undefeated lacrosse season and a state championship. What she's taken from Chelsea into her life, is her drive to achieve her goals, and to make meaningful friendships with her superiors in college, and later, in her professions. And although I'm sure she'll move on from her little town in life, images of two laughing girls struggling in a three-legged race or of a snowy Jaws sculpture will always float into her memory, as well as the desire for a baked potato heaped with nacho cheese and bacon