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Berlin High School Alumni Association - "The Oldest in the State"

25-year alumna Christiansen-Taranov moves to Washington, D.C., finds success in publishing career

By Natalie Speers, 2015

In the 25 years since alumna Denise Taranov graduated from Berlin High School in 1990, she has managed to successfully establish herself in the publishing business, publish her own book and begin her own loving family.

After graduating from high school, Taranov attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and earned BA degrees in International Relations, English and Spanish.

A year later, Taranov moved to Washington, D.C. and began her professional journey, testing many jobs in search of something in the field of International Relations.

"I chose Washington, D.C. because it has many organizations that are missions-based and a broad range of jobs," Taranov said. "I also like that the area has diverse people and cultures and provides easy access to public resources, like museums."

Taranov worked many different jobs, ranging from training coordinator, to program manager, to independent consultant (all at different organizations).

Taranov now lives in Falls Church, Vir-

ginia with her family and works for Deca Management for masstransit publishing and management consulting for publishing fiction.

In 2001, Taranov married Timofey (Tim) Taranov in Green Lake, Wisconsin. Tim moved to Washington, D.C. after finishing college. Together they now have two sons, Alek (10 years old) and Nicolai (six years old).

Amidst Taranov's many successes with both her family and her career, she wrote and self-published her own novel in 2012, called "Climbing Urban Sky".

"After I moved to D.C., I had to reconcile my context of growing up in a small Midwestern town with living on the East Coast," Taranov said. "The novel ('Climbing Urban Sky') is what I wish I could have read at that time in my life. I wrote it so it exists for anyone else going through a similar experience."

Taranov's transition from a small town to an urban area to eventually establishing herself as a professional consultant came with its difficulties, but she is proof that it can be done with the right mindset.

"I had to cut myself free of what was



Keynote speaker, 25-year alumna Denise Taranov now works as a management consultant and lives in Falls Church, Virginia.

safe in order to grow," Taranov said. "There is fear with taking risk, so you have to practice it. Instead of worrying about what will happen, you give yourself permission to follow your intuition so you can see what comes of it. Jumping off the cliff is startling, but then gliding over new land, you wonder how it could have been any other way."

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Endowment Fund rewards seniors

The BHS Alumni Association Endowment Fund continues to grow and to be used to give five graduating seniors a scholarship to assist with college tuition. In addition, it is used to fund The Echo newsletter. The Alumni Association would like to acknowledge that since 2009, our donations exceeded the costs for the scholarships and banquet. Thank you for helping to reward both past and present Berlin High School graduates.

The 2014 BHS Alumni Association Scholarship recipients, who received \$1,000 each, were

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50-year speaker, Julie Seaman Boeck, speaks about high school memories

By Tyler Ostrowski, 2016

The city of Berlin has changed significantly over the past fifty years. What were once farm fields filled with crops have become homes and businesses for thousands of people.

50-year alumna Julie Seaman Boeck has been here to witness nearly all of them.

"I remember being able to

walk across town in about ten minutes," Boeck said. "It was that much smaller."

Over the past 50 years, Boeck has called Berlin her home.

"While a lot of my high school friends decided to move away, I loved it here," Boeck said. "I could never imagine living anywhere else."

A prominent memory of her

time in high school is going to pep assemblies.

"It was such a great feeling of community being surrounded by your friends and neighbors," Boeck said.

Boeck would like to share even more memories in her speech at the Alumni banquet.

"The only problem is picking which ones to tell," Boeck said.

Alumni Spotlight: Grenier '12 travels world, chases dreams

By Emily Beltran, 2016

Alumna Erin Grenier, '12, is accomplishing many of her lifelong dreams. Grenier attended training to be part of the Navy Reserve and is now attending UW-Milwaukee majoring in Satellite and Overhead Imagery, with a Russian minor.

"I took an untraditional route after graduating (high school) and after a month off, I went to boot camp," Grenier said.

Grenier attended boot camp that began with 80 girls and ended with only 40. She believed it was good for her to get away from her small town.

"The hardest part was getting in the right mindset and overcom-

ing the challenges," Grenier said. "To overcome them, I thought of my mother who passed away when I was younger. I thought of what she would want me to do."

Erin's dad, Mike Grenier, is retired from the military and was a huge supporter of her decision.

"I was able to put things into perspective for her. Otherwise, I just listened and told her how proud I am of her," Grenier said.

After completing boot camp, Grenier lived in Virginia for seven months for job training. She then came back to Wisconsin and went to school on the GI Bill and is worknig in Minneapolis as a reservist.

"I am on track to graduate in



Erin Grenier, '12, completed 27 weeks of Naval Intelligence Specialist Training in June of 2013.

two years and I would like to end up at the National Geo-Spatial Agency," Grenier said.

Last summer Grenier was able to visit the United Nations and is currently in South Africa studying abroad.

"I took a leap of faith doing this and now I travel the world and love what I do," Grenier said.

Thanks to the **Farmers & Merchants Bank** and to the **First National Bank of Berlin** for underwriting the costs of postage for this newsletter. Also, thank you to the **Berlin Journal** for public relations support throughout the year.

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Highlights from the Red 'n' Green

Students follow path to specialty schools

by Alyssa Thiel, 2016

Seniors Corey Viars and Mikhayla Luttropp's career choices have led them each to a specialty school.

Viars is headed to Madison Media Institute and Luttropp has decided to go to Aveda in Milwaukee.

After touring MMI, Viars knew it was the best choice for his career path.

Viars wants a career that will allow him to influence people to do positive things.

"The real movers of nations are not politicians, they are people who can influence the mind," Viars said. "As a movie director I'll be able to do that."

At Madison Media Institute, Viars will be able to complete his degree in Video Motion Graphics and Independent Digital Film in

two years.

Luttropp decided to go to Aveda because of its prestige. "I chose this school because it's one of the best schools to go to for cosmetology," Luttropp said.

Luttropp will be able to complete her degree in cosmetology in nine months and is planning to get a job in Green Bay once she finishes her schooling.

"I've always wanted to live there and I believe that there are many opportunities for me there," Luttropp said. "My family has been really supportive of me with my decision."

Counselor Matt Willett believes that these schools will put Viars and Luttropp on the right track to graduate and find a career in a short amount of time.

"The benefit of a specialty

school is that you are able to get into a specific program for your field of interest immediately," Willett said. "That way you can be done with schooling quicker and begin your career sooner."



Photo: K. Williams

"MMI has the best and newest equipment along with the best professors," Viars said.



Photo: K. Williams
 "I want to make the world more beautiful," Luttropp said.

Vang sponsored by national company

by Sierra Klawitter, 2015

Since he was young, junior Nujerry Vang has practiced his gaming skills, which have become most useful this past year.

"Halfway through my sophomore year, my team and I were sponsored by Monster Gaming to play 'Call of Duty' at a professional level," Vang said.

In February Vang and his team competed in Dallas, Texas and won first place out of 287 teams.

"Since I began playing video games professionally, I've made about \$80,000," Vang said.

Guidance counselor Matt Willett is helping Vang in his decision-making process for the future.

"Nujerry is a great kid with a lot of options," Willett said. "I think it's amazing that he can save up for the future while doing what he loves."

Going to national venues does come at a cost. Vang practices his gaming skills often.

"On school days I usually practice for about five hours," Vang said. "On the weekends, depending on what I have to do, it's usually an all day kind of thing."

Despite having to be dedicated 24/7, Vang would still not trade his job.

"Most people think gaming is all fun and games," Vang said. "To me, gaming takes a lot of hard work, dedication and especially team chemistry."

Alumna serves as missionary in Liberia

by Alyssa Thiel, 2016

Sara (Dean) Sheppard, '04, has been serving as a missionary in Liberia. Sheppard returned to the United States in July and plans to return to Liberia sometime next year. Together she and her husband work to fulfill needs of the elderly, sick and disadvantaged, along with bringing people together spiritually through the Bible.

"We see that there is a need for help in Liberia and that's where God has called us to be and to serve," Sheppard

said. Sheppard and her family live in Voinjama, a rural town near the border of Guinea. Voinjama was the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak.

"Cases began breaking out in April and we were forced to stay in Monrovia for two months until it passed," Sheppard said.

Sheppard and her family returned to the United States in July. During their time here, Ebola had broken out again in Liberia, meaning no missionaries were allowed back into the country.

"Once the Ebola crisis is back under control, we will return to Liberia until we have a church established and the Bible fully translated into the Manyakan language," Sheppard said.

In the fall, Sheppard and her husband John-Mark guest spoke to the Human Spirit class.

"I wanted to talk about the choices that high schoolers have to make every day that can impact the rest of their lives," Sheppard said.

Human spirit students said the presentation was compelling.

"What they are doing means a lot to me, going out and helping the world with the risk of getting Ebola," foreign exchange student Sophia Quarcoo said.

The presentation ultimate-

ly left students with a sense of appreciation for Sheppard's work.

"It's hard to believe that people could be that passionate about something," senior Kayla Klapper said.



Photo Submitted

Sara Sheppard, '04, helps to sort fruit in preparation to take to a market in Gbarnga.