

Comet Alumni Spotlight

Kerry Blakesley Klesath Class of 2001

Educational Background:

I attended St. Thomas for grade school and then moved on to Peoria Notre Dame for high school. I graduated from Saint Louis University where I received my Bachelor of Arts in Mild to Moderate Disabilities. After moving back to Peoria for my first teaching job, I received my Masters of Science in Special Education from Illinois State University, specializing in behavior, curriculum and instruction. In 2017, I completed a post master's graduate program and received my Director of Special Education certification.

Recent Achievements:

In July 2023, I became the Director of the Special Education Association of Peoria County (SEAPCO). I started my teaching career with SEAPCO in 2009. It has been an honor to serve this organization in a leadership role!

Family:

My husband Pat and I got married in 2012 and are parishioners of St. Jude Catholic Church. Emma (7) is in 2nd grade and Lucy (5) is in Kindergarten. While I grew up at St. Thomas, Pat was a St. Phil's Tiger. We had a tough time deciding on schooling for the girls, so we settled on a new "home" for them at St. Jude. I'll continue reliving my Comet days through my nieces and nephew - Marion, Genevieve, and Ben! We have enjoyed watching our girls grow up with their cousins as they are involved in many activities - soccer, running, art, and tumbling. My older sister, Jamie, lives in Peoria with her husband and their 2 kids, Hayden and Beckett, who also attend St. Jude. My younger sister Rachel lives in Minnesota with her husband and their daughter, Harper. Our girls love having their grandparents close by. We can't imagine not having our families in town to help us raise our girls - it takes a village! We both come from big families and are incredibly blessed to have aunts, uncles, and many cousins who we are still very close with!



Favorite experience as a St. Thomas Comet:

Some of my favorite memories include my involvement in STS cheerleading and parochial soccer, as well as field day and all the school dances. I also look back at my time at STS and Monsignor Watson was involved in all of my sacraments - Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Communion up to our wedding day!

St. Thomas teacher who made an impact on you:

I had many favorites in my time at St. Thomas - but, the one that sticks out the most is Ms. Hertz in 2nd grade. It was my most memorable year because of the strong rapport she built with her students. She went out of her way to get to know students, their strengths, hobbies, and interests.

Piece of advice for current Comets:

In 6th grade, we had to interview someone that inspires us so I interviewed my Granny Putman. The advice she gave me was "live life knowing you left it a better place". I always strive for this with my family and within my work. I encourage current Comets to do the same - be kind, have faith, and give back - leave a lasting impact!