

Spotlights- April 24, 2015

Colleen Abbale



School Counselor, High School

My History at BSCSD: This is my first year but I also interned here in 2010!

Where I live: Queensbury

Favorite Hobbies: Being outside and spending time with family and friends.

Favorite memory from when I was in school: Junior prom

What I like about working at BSCSD: The feeling of being a part of a family. Everyone is welcoming, giving and willing to help each other out.

Ways I give back to my community: I love participating in events, mostly 5K's, that donate to local charities.

Favorite musician: Dave Matthews Band

Favorite TV show(s): Friends

People might be surprised to know that I: have a passion to study the brain! I was a teaching assistant for Biopsychology in college and considered getting my Ph.D. to continue my studies.

If money were no object I would: travel the world!

Pattie Ball



Executive Secretary to the Superintendent, District Office

My history at BSCSD: I have worked as Executive Secretary to the Superintendent for 20 years.

Where I live: I live in Providence, a very small town of 1800 residents in the foothills of the Adirondack Park.

Family Pets: I'm owned by Jasper, a 4 year old Lab/Great Pyrenees mix.

Favorite hobbies/pastimes: As a spectator, I enjoy watching football (go Bills!), hockey and figure skating. As a participant I enjoy running, walking, ice skating and snowshoeing. I am currently training for two half marathons in May 2015 and October 2015. I also enjoy painting, reading, photography and gardening.

Favorite memory from when I was in school: I used to help out in the special education classroom during my lunch and free

period. That inspired me to be a volunteer figure skating coach for blind and multiply handicapped children and adults.

What I like best about working at BSCSD: I enjoy the camaraderie and small community feel of the district.

Ways I give back to my community: I have been involved with the Special Olympics and the Arthritis Foundation. My dog Sadie was a therapy dog with Therapy Dogs International, and she and I visited nursing home residents together. I'm planning to get Jasper certified as a therapy dog as well.

My favorite song or musician(s): Bruno Mars

My favorite book(s): Water for Elephants by Sara Gruen

Favorite movie or TV show: Modern Family and anything on HGTV

People would be surprised to know that I: was a competitive figure skater for 12 years- from age 6 to 18 when I was sidelined by a knee injury.

If money were no object I would: open an animal sanctuary to care for abused, neglected and abandoned animals.

Michelle Brandt



Math teacher, Middle School

My history at BSCSD: This is my second year at Ballston Spa.

Where I live: Clifton Park

Family Pets: We have a puppy named Kicks who is full of energy and loves to play!

Favorite Hobbies: I love spending time with my family, especially my brother who is a senior this year and will be heading off to college in the fall. I am recently married and look forward to spending time with my husband each and every day. I enjoy shopping and exercising when I can find the time. We are currently building a home which has become a hobby, because it is so time consuming!

Favorite memory from when I was in school: My favorite memory from when I was in school was when I was in 3rd grade and my teacher had turned our entire classroom into a Rainforest. I remember walking in that day and couldn't wait to start learning about the topic! I have vivid memories of that

classroom and that unit to this day!

What I like most about working at BSCSD: My favorite thing about working at BSCSD is the amazing staff that is incredibly supportive and positive! There is a strong sense of community that makes coming to work each day wonderful.

Ways I give back to my community: My husband and I are very active in raising awareness for Alzheimer's, which is a cause that is near and dear to our families heart.

My favorite song/musician: Jason Mraz

My favorite Book: Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn

My favorite movie or TV show: Movies: I am addicted to "The Voice"

People would be surprised to know that I: have completed a Tough Mudder and have run half marathons!

If money were no object I would: be doing exactly what I am doing! I love teaching and have always known this was the career for me! I would use my resources to help others who struggle financially to support their families.

Monique Cohen



Social Studies teacher, Middle School & High School

My history with BSCSD: This is my 8th year here. I currently teach 7th grade social studies and Economics 12.

Where I live: Ballston Spa

Family pets: Frankie the cat.

Favorite hobbies/pastimes: Playing soccer; Buffalo Bills fan and NY Yankee fan.

Favorite memory from when I was in school: Varsity soccer and student council president (at Ballston Spa)

Ways I give back to the community: March of Dimes walk and donations of needed items to the Albany Medical Center's NICU

What I like most about working at BSCSD: Besides the students, I work with really talented and amazing people!

My favorite song/musician: Dave Matthews Band, Two Step

My favorite book: Anything historical usually; Thomas Friedman's China: That Used to Be Us

My favorite TV show(s): I watch way too much TV, but my favorite lately is Big Bang Theory.

People would be surprised to know that I: was in the Guinness Book of World Records in college for the world's largest water balloon fight.

If money were no object I would: travel the world.

I would also like to share: I am a proud momma to a one year old little boy.

Kimberly Russell



Special Education teacher, Wood Road Elementary School

My History with BSCSD: This is my 14th year in the district.

Where I live: Malta

Family pets: 2 dogs: Katie Elizabeth (a crazy hound dog) and Homer John (a lazy chocolate lab); and 1 cat: Jack Frost (a black kitten)

Favorite hobbies/pastimes: I LOVE to read in my free time, work on word searches and number games. I also like to ride my bike. Last year I started skiing again after 20 years. I love watching football and have always been a Giants fan.

Favorite memory from when I was in school: I loved school, so I

have lots of great memories of school; but, what I would like to share is actually my favorite story (told by my mom) from my first day of kindergarten (keep in mind I was only four). When the bus pulled up on the first day, I was too small to climb up onto the first step of the bus. My older brothers tried to help me, but I was very independent and told them I could do it myself. I set my lunchbox on the ground, stepped on it, and climbed up onto the first step. Then I turned around, knelt down on the step and reached down to pick up my lunch box. Then I proceeded to go up the rest of the steps and find my seat. My mom said that the bus driver just stared with his mouth open, then laughed aloud. He had never seen that before!

Ways I give back to my community: I volunteer for the Miss Scotties Softball organization.

What I like most about working at BSCSD: I love the kids and the staff that I work with. I also love that I live in this community and that my girls go to school in Ballston Spa.

My favorite song or musician(s): My current favorite songs are Try by Colbie Caillat and Thinking Out Loud by Ed Sheeran. Life of the Party by Shawn Mendes (it's the theme song for my classroom this year).

My favorite book: Gone with the Wind (I read it once a year)

My favorite movie or TV show: "Love it or List it" and "Fixer Upper"

People may be surprised to know that I: grew up in a VERY, VERY small town. I lived in a log cabin on about 100 acres of land in the middle of nowhere; it was even on a dirt road. My whole school, K-12 had about 375 kids. That means my high school graduating class had only 30 kids in it (and my class was one of the bigger ones!).

If money were no object I would: Buy a bigger house and take awesome vacations around the world with my whole family.

I also want to share: I have two amazing daughters, Meghan and Julia. They are the light of my life!

Amanda Thouin



Third grade teacher, Malta Avenue Elementary School

My history at BSCSD: This is my first year working for the district.

Where I live: Queenbury

Family Pets: I have a dog named Gander. She is a Wire Haired Pointing Griffon.

Favorite pastimes/hobbies: I enjoy hiking, camping, snowshoeing, reading, cooking and spending time with loved ones.

Favorite memory from when I was in school: My favorite memory from elementary school was when I participated in an orienteering event. My classmates and I raced against each other using compasses and maps to navigate from one point to another in a state park. it was a lot of fun!

What I like best about working at BSCSD: I have enjoyed every minute of working at Malta this year! We have a wonderful school community.

Ways I give back to the community: I enjoy giving back to the community through donating, shopping locally and participating

in events related to the school community.

Favorite musician(s): Jack Johnson and Ben Harper

Favorite Book: I enjoy reading memoirs. I also like to read non-fiction and books about nature and animals.

Favorite movie or TV show: Anything on Discovery Channel, National Geographic and Animal Planet.

People may be surprised to know that I: was once fluent in Russian. I attended a K-8 elementary school in which Russian instruction began in first grade. I completed the Russian Speaking and Writing Olympics at the college level in grades 6-8!

If money were no object I would: build a cabin on a lake to use as our primary residence.

Regina Vanasdale



School Aide, High School

My history at BSCSD: 7.5 years

Where I live: Greenfield Center

Family pets: Autumn (cat) and Lincoln (dog)

Favorite sports/hobbies: Gardening, obedience class with my golden retriever who is going for his therapy dog certification; travel.

Favorite memory from when I was in school: Blue and Gold; a girls annual competition of sports, dance and music. I was a captain my senior year and my team won.

Ways I give back to my community: I am a town of Greenfield Lion's member; Ladies of Charity in Saratoga which raises money for underprivileged children; and, the Donna M. Crandall foundation in memory of my sister who succumbed to cystic fibrosis. We raise money for families and patients of cystic fibrosis in Albany Medical Center.

My favorite song or musician: Genesis, Phil Collins

Favorite Book: Water for Elephants or The Jungle

People may be surprised to know that I: ran my own business in the past. And that I am the mother of triplets.

If money were no object I would: build a new house that would be closer to town (Saratoga) so I could walk to different venues.