



# Black Horse Pike Regional School District Spotlight on Alumni Spotlight – October 2020



## ASHLEA (MERGENTHAL) REESE, CO 2006

*“Ashlea was an exemplary student when she was at Highland. She participated in many activities including being an officer in Student Council. She took that hard-working attitude off to college with her where she got her undergrad degree and then went on to pursue a master's degree in School Counseling. Ashlea got a job as a School Counselor in the Winslow SD before she came back to our district last year as a MHAC (Mental Health Assistance Counselor). This is only her second year working for BHP but she has already left her mark as a knowledgeable, compassionate, and (of course!) hard-working member of our educational community.”*

*~ Jan Vizoco*

### **1. AA: Upon graduation, what post-secondary path did you take and why?**

*Ashlea: I attended Rowan University and received my Bachelors of Liberal Arts in Psychology. I then furthered my education and received my Masters in Counseling in an Educational Setting, also at Rowan University.*

### **2. Looking back, would you have done anything differently and why?**

*Ashlea: One thing I would have done differently would be to take the time to not rush the high school experience. In high school, as students, we want it to move on to the next*

*stage in our life as quickly as possible. We begin as young adults dreaming of the future and its possibilities. We want to be adults and have more freedom and responsibility. I wish I had known then that I would miss my time at Highland so much. Although I was involved in many events, club, sports, and activities in high school, I wish I had said yes to every opportunity and experience I was offered. My piece of advice to anyone still in high school is to focus on your school work and get involved as much as possible. High school only happens ONCE!*

**3. AA: Describe your career/profession today?**

*Ashlea: Today, I am currently the Mental Health Assistance Counselor at Timber Creek Regional High School. I spent many years working at a local school district, however, my dream was always to return to Black Horse Pike School District.*

**4. AA: What impact did your BHP high school have on your career path/profession?**

*Ashlea: When I began college, I knew I was meant to be a School Counselor because of my time at Highland High School. I even returned to Highland High School for my yearlong internship for my master's program. My internship was under the supervision of **Michele Hengel**. I truly believe I am the counselor I am today because all that I learned from Mrs. Hengel throughout my internship. Even years after my internship was complete, I would always find myself going back to my notes and documents of what she taught me and using that as a guide to work with my students, parents, staff members and all stakeholders in the community.*

**5. AA: Were there specific teacher(s), coach(es), counselor(s), administrator(s), secretary(ies), or other professionals that had a major impact on you while in school, and if so, who were those professionals and describe how they helped you along your HS journey.**

*Ashlea: I have two staff members that made a major impact on my high school experience. The first staff member is **Jan Vizoco**. Whenever I needed advice or guidance in school, she was always the person I knew I could turn to. I thank Mrs. Vizoco for her continued support and motivation throughout my years at Highland. She was such a role model to myself and other students. Mrs. Vizoco was integral in my decision to become a School Counselor and help other students in the same way she helped me. The second staff member that had a major impact on my high school journey was **Joanne Fudala**. From Discussion and Debate to English class, she always pushed me to be a stronger academic student. In Mrs. Fudala's class, I learned to think outside of the box and challenge what I had always accepted as correct. When it came time to write my college*

entrance essays, she spent day after day helping revise my work until it was ready to be submitted. Without her help and assistance, I do not know what college would have looked like for me. My experience with Mrs. Vizoco and Mrs. Fudala push me as someone who now works with young adults. I strive every day to make a positive impact in the lives of my students.

**6. AA: Which school clubs, sports, activities, etc., if any, did you participate in when you attended your BHP high school? If so, were there any moments or experiences that you can recall that helped you become the person you are today?**

*Ashlea: I think all of the extra-curricular activities I participated in at Highland helped shape me into who I am today. School work and classes can be demanding enough. However, I knew participating in things outside of the classroom was important as well. Whether it was Student Council or Cheer, it took time, dedication, and hard work. Those are all things continue to work towards in all areas of my life.*

*~Co Vice President of Student Council in 2005-2006 ~Cheerleading for 4 Years*

*~Class of 2006 Council for 4 Years ~Interact Club for 2 Years*

**7. AA: Please share any other favorite memories of the Black Horse Pike Regional School District, your HS in particular, that would inspire today's youth?**

*Ashlea: My favorite memories of BHP and Highland High School was cheering at football games with my identical twin sister, Brittany, and my closest friends. The friendships I made in high school, 15 years ago, have lasted well into my adult years. We all built these friendships within the walls of Highland High School. These are memories I still cherish today. Another memory was cheering on my cousin Sean Mergenthal with our families in the stands behind us. My cousin was a year behind me in school, Class of 2007, and it was always awesome to see him play and experience high school with him and my sister. The Mergenthals' at a basketball game, on the sideline or on the court, was always a great time spent with family.*

**8. What advice would you give to our current student body? What would you have done differently in high school if you could turn back time?**

*Ashlea: High school will be one of the greatest chapters in your life. It will fly by, so get involved as much as possible and take it all in.*

