

Name

Karen Jackson Shelton

Year of Graduation

1992

What have you done since graduating from Port Allegany High School?

During my time at Port Allegany High School I developed a love for math – algebra, trig, geometry, calculus – all of it! I knew I wanted a career in math but also knew that teaching wasn't for me. Before graduating I stumbled across an obscure profession – Actuary - that seemed like a good fit. To that end, I attended Gannon University, graduating in 1996 with a Mathematics major and a Business minor.

So, what is an actuary? An actuary is a business professional who deals with the measurement and management of risk. Actuaries address risks in areas like health care, pensions, life insurance, and property & casualty insurance. The career is consistently ranked among the top in America by a variety of sources. A series of exams are required to become a credentialed actuary. I took my first exam in 1995 and received the Fellowship designation in 2009 – yes 14 years of studying!

Currently I work at United Health Care – the nation's largest health insurance company. Being in the health insurance industry has been fascinating and gives me a strong sense of purpose, knowing that I can positively influence the way healthcare is financed and delivered.

Since graduating from PAHS I have also become fully devoted to the Christian faith. This is the cornerstone of my life, completely transforming my focus and priorities. Although my career path has stayed the course, the successes and personal growth I've experienced would not have occurred otherwise.

Where do you currently live?

In 1998 I moved to the Richmond, Virginia area and is where I reside today with my husband, Mark, our two school-aged children, Hannah and Nathan, and our Boston Terrier, Manny. Over the years there were a few geographical detours - one taking me to London, England for 2 years. This was one of the best experiences of my life and I still find myself in awe that it actually occurred. To say I was nervous about the move was an understatement. I had grown up in Port Allegany, after all, and was moving to a city of 12 million people where I knew absolutely nobody. But, WOW, did I have a great time! I returned to the States in 2003 having made lifelong friends and visiting many amazing countries. I even put to use the French I learned from Mrs. Gregg and Miss Hall!

Who was your favorite teacher in high school? Why were they your favorite?

I was blessed to have consistently wonderful math teachers throughout the years at Port Allegany High School, including Mrs. Mulaski, Mr. Gregg, Mr. Owen, Mr. Daisley and Mr. VanGorden. Each one of these teachers fostered a love for math, leading to a STEM career which I'm passionate about. My life would look very different today without the influence of these teachers.

What is your fondest memory of Port Allegany High School?

Port Allegany afforded me the opportunity to participate in an abundance of extracurricular activities like cheerleading, band, chorus, golf and yearbook staff that I may not have had at a larger school. Between these activities and the classroom, my best friendships were formed and many shenanigans were had!

If you or anyone you know would like to learn more about an actuarial career, please don't hesitate to reach out at unionjackson74@hotmail.com



