

The Bonfire

A Monthly Newsletter for the Alumni & Friends of the Missouri Academy

January 1st, 2016

Issue 4

Happy New Year to All!

By Robert Bryant Jr, MASM Director of Enrollment

Greetings and Happy New Year to All!

I am excited by the opportunity to write this note to all of you “Bearcademites” as we bring in the new year. When you look back in retrospect and think that the Missouri Academy has celebrated 15 years in existence, you must smile at the fact that each of you were contributors to the history and legacy of what we have today. We have some pretty impressive memories. I am so proud of all of you and what you have accomplished in your lives and careers. Our place at Northwest Missouri State University is significant because of you. I just wanted to take the time and let you know that we are honored that you chose to attend school at the Missouri Academy and to encourage you as you continue in your career paths.

The idea of someone being “gifted and talented” has erroneously come with a time frame. Typically, the window seems to vary from 3 to 17. I have come to let you know that contrary to popular belief, all of you are still gifted and talented. As we grow older, we often neglect the notion that we are still worthy of that label. This does not make any of you an elitist. It simply says that you enjoy challenges and hunger for more on an intellectual level. You’ve still got it!

It is thrilling to look at the list of gainfully employed citizens that have graduated from the Academy. While it is easy to become frustrated if you compare achievements of some vs. others, I celebrate EVERYONE because you all have and are significantly impacting each other as well as the various communities where you reside. Besides, we are family, so when one succeeds we all succeed. Whether you are in a STEM related career matters not! My message is to simply remind you that you are still incredible. We need your minds and engagement on so many levels. It could be at the city council meeting, or at the school board meeting. It could also be in the boardroom or the laboratory at your job.

Your voice and intellect has the ability to inspire many, so use it! We must have your engagement because nobody can put a spin on such topics with clarity like you guys, and you know this for yourselves. We are heading into a new political season so please make your voices heard!

Once again, I am incredibly proud of each of you. I always get excited when I hear from you or if you just send a post to say “hello”. Thank you for being Superwomen and Supermen at a time when our world needs heroes and role-models. All of that talk about IQ was worth it and it looks good on you! Thank you for remembering where you have come from and just know that I’m a fan!

Happy New Year!

*Robert Bryant Jr
Director of Enrollment*

Volunteers Needed

This January, Rob will be hosting three public information sessions for potential Academy students, and he would love to get some alumni volunteers. The sessions are as follows:

Saint Louis

Jan 6th, 6:30pm at Saint Louis University

Springfield

Jan 13th, 7:00pm at Missouri State University

Kansas City

Jan 20th, 7:00pm at Metropolitan Community College

If you are free to help with any of these meetings, please contact Rob Bryant at bryantr@nwmissouri.edu and he will keep you in the loop!

“I have benefited from the Missouri Academy in many more ways than I am probably aware of. MASM provided a template of academic excellence based around a small community of like-minded individuals. Also, the network of friends (both near and far) I formed while attending the Missouri Academy has stayed a pivotal part of my life.”

- Nathan Brown, Trailblazer Class of 2007

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Alumni Spotlight: Lydia Welker

Pioneer Class of 2011

I tend to break concepts down into lists. It's the technical writer in me—a professor once told me that technical writers are “simplifiers,” and I couldn't agree more—and as I think back to my one-and-a-half years at the Missouri Academy, encased in yellow, metal walls with peers from all over the world, I am reminded of three ways the Academy impacted my career goals: technical writing, computer science, and community service.



When I arrived for my first day at the Academy in January 2010 as a half-year, new and excited and scared, I had no desire to insert myself into STEM fields. I attended and loved the program for its academic and social challenges, but I wanted to work with words, and that never changed. What changed was my interest in technical writing, the most STEM-y of all the writing fields, and it was due to the “computing” of the Missouri Academy of Science, Mathematics, and Computing that I was able to dip my toe into areas such as software documentation and web development.

I earned my Bachelor of Science in Professional Writing at Missouri State University in Springfield, MO, and throughout the program, I interned at an insurance software company, a financial processing firm, and an international nonprofit organization. Currently, I'm working toward my Master of Arts in Professional Writing and Editing at West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV, and as I do so, I'm working on several projects as a digital publishing research assistant, such as teaming up with a company in Norway to build an open source digital

publishing platform and building the foundation for an institute of digital publishing at the university's library. My writing skills came into play for all of those opportunities, of course, but what put me over the edge was that little extra something, that burst of energy as I played with code and built projects on the web, something I would not have discovered if not for the courses introduced to me at the Academy.

But that's just extra. What I really love is writing and editing and commas and working with a sentence until it's just right and advocating for an audience I may never meet. That's what I enjoy doing, and most of all, I want to use my love of words to make a positive change in the world. It started at the Academy with a nonprofit organization called NETWORK Against Malaria, and while I have fundraised for NETWORK ever since then, I wanted to use my writing skills to promote their mission and the goals of other nonprofits. It started with writing grants for NETWORK, and later I re-vamped a website for Compassion International, and starting in February, I'll write grants for the Appalachian Prison Book Project and make their website mobile-friendly. That's my true joy—doing the things I love to help the causes I care about. That's what the Missouri Academy gave to me.

To get into my apartment in Morgantown (that I share with another Academy alum, coincidentally), I use the same type of fob keys as we all did in Maryville. Can you imagine? More than four years of post-Academy life and I still cringe sometimes when I open the door, expecting to hear the blaring, ear-twisting alarms. But there's no more midnight curfew, and no more fob alarms; just memories of late-night study sessions, crowded white vans, and standing on mountainous snowdrifts, ready to conquer the world.

Have a Good Story to Share?

Send it to us! We're collecting short stories (three to four sentences, generally) to include here, in the newsletter! Whether it's a nostalgic story from the Academy, musings on the way the Academy has affected your life, or an update on what you've been up to in the years since, we'd love to hear it. Send them to us at MASMCalumni@gmail.com, and we'll take it from there!