

Where are they now?

The Hi-Life caught up with two former Pike students who have found success after graduation

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There's always a lingering question when a class graduates. What are they going to do with their lives? Will they go to college? Will they join the armed forces? Did they major in that subject they were interested in? The Hi-Life followed up with two Pike graduates, Brionna Davis-Reyes and Naudica Allen, and discussed their high school years, college years and their careers.

Davis-Reyes has received acclaim for her accomplishments in her career after graduating from Pike in 2009. After graduation, Davis-Reyes went to school to become a translational neuroscientist, specializing in addiction neurobiology and protein biochemistry. Her work in the field has earned her recognition from scientific organizations across the nation. She credits her years at Pike for the success she has attained in her career.



Brionna Davis-Reyes

“I had a really nice experience at Pike, I really enjoyed going. It was really important for how my career shaped up.” Davis-Reyes said. In her time at Pike, Davis-Reyes participated in the International Baccalaureate Programme, which she says prepared her for her college courses.

“When I left, I had a slew of credits that I tested out of from taking AP and IB tests,” Davis-Reyes said. “I was able to focus on my major courses and didn’t have to take extra courses to complete my degree requirements.”

Pike staff recognized Davis-Reyes’ drive and cordiality in her time at Pike.

“That’s one of the things I do remember about (Davis-Reyes). She was always a go-getter,” Pike’s IB coordinator, Danielle Vohland, said. “She was very dynamic and she related well to her peers.”

Davis-Reyes remembers teachers like Peter Kuester, whose history class she enjoyed while at Pike. When Davis-Reyes graduated, she finished in the top 25 of her graduating class with a full-ride scholarship to Prairie View University in Texas, a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) that offered an exceptional medical school – a field she had considered pursuing at the time.

Davis-Reyes talked about her decision to attend an HBCU for her college experience.

“I’m so happy that I made that decision. There’s something different about going to an HBCU. It’s such a dramatically different experience,” Davis-Reyes said. She added that she values the representation in her peers and mentors that Prairie View provided for her.

Davis-Reyes credits pre-collegiate consultant at Pike, Dr. Ruth Woods, as a significant figure in her high school career. Dr. Woods helped Davis-Reyes research colleges, particularly HBCUs, and guided her to apply at Prairie View.

“HBCUs typically have a higher job placement rate than other colleges and universities. I pointed Davis-Reyes in Prairie View’s direction because I thought it would be a good fit for her,” Dr. Woods said.

As time went on, Davis-Reyes began to lose interest in the medical field and shift her focus towards research. When she finished her undergraduate years at Prairie View, Davis-Reyes joined a postdoctoral program, which allowed her to focus on research projects and to work closely with graduate students. During her time in the postdoctoral program, Davis-Reyes joined the Center for Addiction research.

Davis-Reyes took a liking to studying impulsivity and developed a passion in studying addiction. After she finished the postdoctoral program, she earned a doctorate degree in biological and biomedical science at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

“It was at one of those particular program conferences that Yale noticed her and noticed the program that she was working on. They offered her a postdoctoral research fellowship,” Dr. Woods said, noting Davis-Reyes’s success. “She has accomplished all of this in only 13 years.”

She now does her postdoctoral studies at Yale University in New Haven, Conn.

“I consider myself to be a translational neuroscientist, meaning I study the brain and think of ways to advance medicine in neuropsychiatric disorders.” Davis-Reyes says. Last January, she was recognized as one of the 1,000 Inspiring Black scientists in America by Cell Mentor, an online scientific journal.

Like Davis-Reyes, another student, 2017 Pike graduate Naudica Allen, decided to pursue a career in the medical field as well. “I definitely knew I wanted to go into nursing when I graduated,” Allen said.

At a young age, Allen was inspired by her grandmother, who was a licensed practical nurse, to become a nurse after she watched her care for her great-grandmother. Allen knew she would excel in the nursing program because of her love for math and science as a child.



Naudica Allen

“I love to learn science, and I was always good at math. That’s a lot of what nursing is,” she said.

Allen’s interest and knack for science was recognized by her teachers as well.

“She was a very strong biology student,” said Leslie Sitzman, who taught Allen in honors biology and AP biology. “She was so responsible as a student. I could definitely see her as a doctor. The way she carried herself, I had already trusted her with my life.”

In her time at Pike, Allen participated in the IB program, JROTC, and played for the school volleyball team. Her favorite teachers she remembers from Pike were science teacher Robb Awe, history teachers Pamela Woods and Mr. Kuester, and math teacher Amanda Huffman. “Those four are my favorite teachers that I’ll never forget,” Allen said.

Ms. Vohland described Allen as quiet, but driven.

“She was the kind of student teachers would want. She got her work done, she was an active participant in her school, and she knew what she wanted and made sure she got there,” Ms. Vohland said.

After graduating, Allen made the decision to pursue her nursing career at IUPUI.

Allen experienced trials and tribulations when first applying for the program.

“My first time I had applied to their nursing program, I didn’t get in the first try because it’s just that competitive,” said Allen. “I retok the class and got an A+ so from there I was able to get into the program.”

Although IUPUI’s ranked nursing program caught Allen’s attention, she didn’t plan on staying there for the duration of her college years.

“I was going to go to IUPUI for one year and then transfer,” she said.

However, she decided to stay because of how much she enjoyed the program and the friends she made while she was there.

In March of 2021, Allen was recognized by IUPUI’s Nursing program as one of the top 100 undergraduate students.

Allen talked about her time in the nursing program.

“The program is definitely very hard. There’s a lot of long nights and studying.” said Allen. She emphasized that nursing requires a lot of critical thinking, which she enjoys.

“Eventually I do want to be a nurse practitioner,” Allen said when speaking about what future she envisions for herself. “They have a higher job satisfaction rate than doctors do.”

Ms. Sitzman expressed her support over Naudica’s chosen career path.

“I think Allen would be a great nurse. She’s super trustworthy, and she’s really friendly, which are both great qualities in being a nurse.” Ms. Sitzman said.

Allen offered her advice to current Pike students who wish to pursue a career similar to hers: “Don’t be discouraged. I know that’s a cliché, but it’s true.”

Allen expressed that she had almost changed her track in nursing after her rejection from the nursing program the first time she applied.

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. You have to be able to maintain peace and self-care,” she said.