



Celebrating the Success of Manson Graduates in the Trades

January 2022

Franki Fernandez— Franki and his family moved to Manson in 2002, when he and his twin brother, Jose, were just eleven years old. With the help of his teachers, Franki learned English quickly and graduated in 2008 from MHS. "Mrs. Susan Neff and Mrs. Heather Teague were always so patient and encouraging. They helped me learn a new language and be a successful student." Franki, a bright young man, was most passionate about learning technical skills in shop class. "Mr. Kevin Amsden gave me the opportunity to tear apart engines and transmissions, waking up my desire to attend a technical college." Franki was granted a scholarship by The Community Foundation of North Central Washington to attend Wenatchee Valley College and graduated in 2011 with his Associate's Degree in Automotive Technology. Franki then moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he attended Central New Mexico Community College to obtain his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and learn the basics in transport and logistics. Franki worked for a few different transport companies over the years and recently decided to start his own business in the transport industry. Today you can find Franki traveling the country hauling local, refrigerated produce all over the continental United States! Franki is a true success story, one that showcases the American Dream. "Never be afraid of change; never give up, and always be persistent. If you do everything with determination, you will succeed."



Marci (Nelson) Reno— Portrait Photographer & Horse Rancher

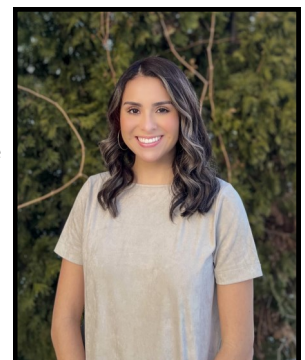


When Marci was two, the Nelson family moved to Manson where her parents, Ken and Krisy Nelson worked at the high school, so Marci spent her childhood roaming the halls and talking with staff. From first grade to her senior year, Marci participated in every sport available, attended Running Start and represented her community as Apple Blossom Princess. "When I think about the valley, my heart swells with nostalgia at the thought of hometown football games, the community gathering for the Apple Blossom Festival and finding any excuse to play at the lake or walk through the orchards. I cherish my childhood memories and feel privileged to have them." After graduation in 2009, Marci attended Brigham Young University and obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife and Wildlands Conservation. While she didn't end up pursuing a career related to her degree, she learned a great deal and enhanced her love of science and the beauty of the natural world. After having her first child, Marci wanted to work from home, so she found an old camera and pursued a

passion she had long neglected. "I stayed up into the wee hours of the night nursing a newborn and watching every YouTube tutorial and online class on photography. I created a syllabus for myself, listing the different aspects of photography I needed to learn." Marci started by offering free photo shoots and eventually began charging for her services. "Long story short, I earned no certification to become a photographer; I just took what resources I had available and worked towards developing a talent." Marci is currently a portrait photographer in Billings, Montana, where she photographs families and couples and strives to catch authenticity in relationships. In balancing her career and family, (Marci and her husband, Chris, have a five and three-year-old) they also manage a little ranch where they breed horses. "While motherhood may not be considered a job to many, it is the largest undertaking I have ever tackled. It's the most refining and humbling pursuit; trying to raise humans who make the world a better place is HARD WORK." Looking back, Marci admires Mrs. Susi Bennett. "Susi and my dad, a retired MHS Science teacher, really inspired me to pursue a science-based education." Marci participated in the Kids-in-the-Creek Program and joined Mrs. Bennett and other biologists collecting mule deer data. "The biologist asked for a volunteer, and not knowing what I was getting into, I volunteered to stick my hand into a deer butt to collect a fecal sample! As strange as it was, I wasn't appalled by the experience and it pointed me to my college path." Marci also remembers Mrs. Kamie Kronbauer as an exceptional teacher who provided her students with challenges and always took the time to help each student. "Her classroom always felt welcoming, and I remember feeling safe enough to have some vulnerable heart-to-heart conversations with her...an impressive feat for a teacher to accomplish with an angsty teenager." Finally, Mrs. Desiree Phelps was Marci's head volleyball coach. "Dez taught me that even if my body wasn't able to accomplish the things I dreamed of, my enthusiasm and passion was a priceless asset to my team. I remember the pride I felt when she designated me the 'heart' of the volleyball team." Marci reminds Manson students to cherish this valley. "You are absolutely blessed to be in the presence of the orchards, lake and mountains. Protect it and take care of it! In such a small community, YOU can make a difference. If you see something that could be improved, speak up and find a way to take action! Then, when you have left your mark at home, to take the opportunity to leave and see the world. Experience different places and cultures, then if you come back to Manson, you will enrich the community with your expanded mind. Always remember YOU are important and bring so much to this world simply by existing in it."

Daicy Leyva— Realtor, Coldwell Banker

"When I first moved to Manson from Mexico, I was overwhelmed, but the welcoming staff, taught me more than I could ever imagine. My teacher, Mrs. Carolyn Mason, was one of the few bilingual teachers; she was incredibly patient with me as I learned a new language and culture." Daicy Leyva quickly found her niche in the Manson community. As Apple Blossom Princess, and a three-sport athlete and scholar, Daicy thrived here. Attending Seattle Pacific University after graduating from MHS in 2017, Daicy earned her Bachelor of Business Administration with a focus on Marketing and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Studies. Thanks to her mentors and internship providers in high school and college, Daicy felt fully prepared to start her future back in the Chelan Valley. She was hired as a Real Estate Hostess by The Lookout development in 2020 where she learned a great deal about the real estate market in our community. Of course Daicy excelled in this profession; as an outgoing and gregarious person, she loved the real estate field. Her employers at The Lookout encouraged her to pursue her realtor's license to sell homes in the Lake Chelan Valley. After a 90-hour course through the Rockwell Institute, and passing the rigorous state exam, Daicy obtained her license. "I am currently a Realtor at Coldwell Banker Lake Chelan Properties. My services entail creating comparative market analysis for buyers/sellers, and keeping track of the market and economic changes that can affect buyers and sellers." Daicy is also a marketing manager for Coldwell Banker. "My main role as marketing manager is to recruit, monitor market trends, create advertising campaigns, develop pricing strategies and targeting strategies based on demographic data. Our goal is to grow our marketing and target those who might be left out of traditional marketing." Daicy is a very social person who is not afraid to ask for help. She is thankful for Ms. Adelina Grageda, her mentor and friend, who continues to support her to this day. "Manson is a tiny town which is a blessing, but don't be afraid to give yourself the chance to explore the world beyond. Find out who YOU really are and where YOU truly belong. Take that risk. You may find yourself right back home, where you were always meant to be."



Lucero Angulo— Beautician, Sally Beauty



As a child, and into her teens, Lucero often wondered why her parents chose the Manson Valley to raise their family. It wasn't until she grew up and moved away that Lucero fully grasped the special place that her family calls home. "Growing up in such a small community has its pros and cons, but my parents chose Manson because of its peaceful and supportive community." Her parents felt secure raising their four children in the valley, thanks to the close-knit neighborhoods and sense of family that surrounded them here. "Since I was little, I have always felt safe living in such an amazing town. I am thankful my parents chose Manson as their forever home." After graduating from Manson High School in 2013, Lucero went directly to the Wenatchee Beauty Academy with a little push from her older sister, Brenda. After just a taste of beauty school, Lucero knew she was hooked on this career path. To obtain her certification and course completion in Cosmetology, she had to amass 1,800 hours and learn a variety of different tasks and techniques. "There was a lot of book reading and technical practice to master before I could even practice on an actual person, but thanks to some amazing people in my field, I learned some great tips and tricks I use to this day." Lucero is currently working at Sally Beauty in Wenatchee where she helps with hair and beauty consultations. She is also a hair dresser and does make-up for weddings and Quinceaneras in the valley. When reflecting on her days as a student at Manson, Lucero recalls, "So many people impacted my life forever and I cherish those memories. Many teachers at MHS helped me get through school and pushed me to finish strong. They all knew I had potential before I saw it myself!" She comments that not many teachers, staff or community members in other places go out of their way to help their students gain a bright future like those at Manson. "Everything I learned came from people who helped me and believed in me; I will now pass all that knowledge on to my nephews and nieces." Lucero firmly believes that high school years should be cherished and every moment enjoyed to the fullest.

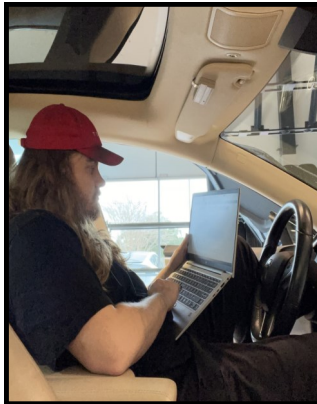
Chad Smith— Head Chef, Occasions Catering

Chad was a Manson transplant from East Wenatchee in the eighth grade when his family relocated to the valley with his step-father who was in the agriculture business. As a child, Chad moved around a lot, but Manson was, by far, the smallest school he attended. Chad was a die-hard athlete and participated on the Mission Ridge Ski Team, played Manson football, ran track and was a member of the Knowledge Bowl and Yearbook staff. Chad enjoyed everything outdoors and all the valley had to offer including boating, camping, hunting, fishing and hiking. In 1994, Chad was featured in the *National Washington State Who's Who* publication and received several local scholarships his senior year. While in high school, Chad worked in the kitchen at Goochis, a favorite restaurant in Chelan in the 90s (it later became B.C. McDonalds and is currently The Landing). "I absolutely fell in love with the chaos and the people in the restaurant business. I still consider many of these people my close friends, like Troy Nesvacil, Executive Chef at Tsillan Cellars, who was my first supervisor. We are still friends to this day." After graduation, Chad attended the University of Washington and graduated with Honors and a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration with a focus of study in Marketing and a minor in American Indian Studies. Chad has since held many positions and has been a carpenter, business owner and sales rep; however, he always found himself back in the hospitality industry. "Whether as a cook, bartender, or consultant, I was always drawn back. I have worked with some extremely talented chefs, who became mentors and friends who furthered my growth and passion for cooking." Prior to the pandemic, he worked as a business and menu consultant for start-up food establishments, but these days, Chad is the Head Chef of Occasions Catering in Olympia, WA, a high-end "white linen" catering business where Chad prepares for weddings, corporate events, government functions and more. "Sometimes I cook for 400 or more people a day!" Chad also is hired as private chef for smaller functions and is in the development stages of his own food company and brand. Reflecting on his days in Manson, Chad fondly remembers the staff. "I honestly can't think of one teacher who didn't impact me in a positive manner. Mr. Kevin Amsden, Mr. Ron McClure, Mr. Dick Cochran, Mrs. Kelly Bell and Mr. Dan Reed were all incredible. Mr. Edd LaMar, former owner of Lake Chelan Building Supply, was a close personal friend and my mentor." To current and future Manson students, Chad advises, "Work hard. Be honest. Show integrity. LIVE IT! And always, always find something you are passionate about as your career."



Chayse Brooks— Tesla #2 Technician, Jacksonville, FL

In Jacksonville, FL, you can find 2016 graduate, Chayse Brooks working towards his Master Technician Certification at Tesla, a far cry from his small town roots in Manson. Chayse attended Wenatchee Valley Community College right after graduation, taking a couple welding classes inspired by his time in MHS shop classes. "I thought welding was what I wanted to do for a living, but after while I got burnt out, so I took a job changing oil at Town Nissan in Wenatchee." At Town, Chayse received online training to become a Scope Technician. After completing the courses, he moved to in-person training at the Nissan Tech Training Center in Kent, WA, while still working at Town Nissan in Wenatchee. Chayse was then hired as a Tech at Northwest Forklift and completed more training to receive his Linde and Unicarrier Certification through their program. Seeing his talent, Chayse was then scooped up by Tesla, where he is currently taking his Master Tech Certification classes with the intention of joining their engineering team. "Clearly, my pathway was not typical. While most people attend a trade school or enrolled in programs offered through a manufacturer like the Tesla Start Program, I just tried to find work using the knowledge I already had. Once I got a position, I did everything I could to learn about the job and everything associated with it. I always kept an eye out for opportunities and always added certifications to my resume to make advancement easier." Chayse is currently working for the Tesla Corporation in Jacksonville, Florida, where he works on all models of Tesla vehicles and their infotainment systems, autopilot computers, drive motors, battery packs and in-depth diagnostic systems. "I am where I am today because of Mr. Kevin Amsden who taught me foundations in shop and FFA. Mr. Amsden taught me leadership through FFA, and public speaking." Chayse also gives gratitude to his father, Troy Brooks. "My dad guided me and supported my endless projects, allowing me to learn how to take things apart and see how they worked. He guided me to



better opportunities outside my comfort zone." He also thanks the staff at Manson. "They were all responsible for where I am today. Always supportive, the Manson staff always allow their students to be creative and passionate about anything they put their minds to." As a Manson alumnus, Chayse encourages younger generations to, "keep an open mind on what may come after high school as your life changes. Always know there are multiple ways to meet a goal you have; some may take more work and time than others, but may work out better in the end. Take classes you never thought about taking and see if you like it; don't ever be afraid of change."

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