

Alumni Spotlight: Isaac & Michelle Stinnett, Class of 1999

Michelle (Forsman) Stinnett, daughter of Rick and Barb Forsman, moved to Grant County in the 5th grade and quickly became a proud product of Grant School District 3. She attended Humbolt Elementary School, Blue Mountain Junior High, and Grant Union High School, where she spent eight formative years surrounded by dedicated educators and opportunities that helped shape her future.

Michelle says, “I had so many amazing teachers in my eight years of school in Grant County!” Several of her favorites stand out vividly in her memory: Mr. Houk “encouraged me to challenge myself, not be afraid to try something new or daunting, and then to work hard.” Mr. Jones was “always so patient and truly cared about his students.” Mr. Kimball, who “empowered me to be more confident in math and in all aspects of life.” Mrs. Reynolds, who imparted a deep understanding of the English language that later served Michelle well in her legal career. Mr. Edigar, whose hands-on science lessons, from dissecting lobsters to sharing an extensive bug collection, fostered a lifelong love of learning and appreciation of science. Michelle also remembers how he always encouraged his students to exercise sound judgment, inside and outside the classroom. “Decades later, I can still hear his voice reminding me to ‘Stay free and clean,’ which is what he told all his students as he dismissed class every Friday.”

Michelle was highly involved at Grant Union, participating in cheerleading, basketball, track, Science Club, student council, Travel Club, and FBLA, while also staying busy with planning for Homecoming and Prom each year. “I took advantage of every opportunity to be involved,” she says. “That continued into college, law school, and even now as I participate in school activities for my children, serve on boards in my community, and grow my law practice.”

Her high school years also included unforgettable travel experiences. As a sophomore, Michelle visited nearly a dozen European countries with a small group of Grant Union students and chaperones, including Hank and Roxie Lissman. “We made lifelong memories, and the trip sparked my desire to travel the world.” Another highlight was traveling to Chicago for the national FBLA competition after winning a state event. “Traveling halfway across the country helped me appreciate small-town life but also fueled my desire to explore new places across our great country.” Another fond memory was the Science Club trips. “Mr. Edigar planned some very memorable trips, including a spelunking trip to the Oregon Caves.”

Serving on student council as a class representative and then student body vice-president also left a lasting impact on Michelle. She recalls one of her biggest life lessons—losing the race for student body president during her senior year. “I worked hard on my campaign and was devastated when I lost the election, but I learned that it’s okay to try and fail, to learn from past failures, and to keep trying. I ended up serving as student body vice-president

and enjoyed the role more than I believe I would have enjoyed serving as president. Everything happens for a reason; sometimes you need to be patient and wait for the right opportunity. Never give up.”

Michelle is grateful for the many opportunities GUHS offered its students. One of her favorites was earning a scholarship for flying lessons, which was offered to one Grant Union student each year. She spent countless hours her senior year at the Grant County Airport learning to fly. “On the morning of my high school graduation, I took my first solo flight, with all of my family there to watch and cheer me on.” She also enjoyed the opportunity to work part-time for local attorney, Dan Cronin, who sparked her interest in the legal profession and inspired her to pursue a career in the law.

After graduating from Grant Union in 1999, Michelle attended Southern Oregon University, where she continued cheerleading and earned a Bachelor of Science in Communication. Inspired by her high school trip to Europe, she spent a semester studying abroad at Winchester University in England. She graduated with honors from SOU in 2003 and returned to John Day, where she coached cheerleading at Grant Union for two years and remained active in the community.

During this time, she reconnected with Isaac Stinnett, son of Frank and Kathy Stinnett. Isaac also grew up in John Day, attended Humbolt Elementary, Blue Mountain Junior High, and Grant Union High School, graduating in 1999. He was involved in yearbook, wrestling, football, and assisting the cheerleading squad with stunts. The two married in 2005 and shortly thereafter moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where Isaac serves in the United States Army under USASOC. He looks forward to retiring soon and moving back West.

Their families blended even more when Isaac’s brother, Elijah, and Michelle’s sister, Jackie, later married as well, making family gatherings even more exciting!

Michelle worked as an insurance agent for several years before pursuing her dream of becoming a lawyer. She attended the University of Notre Dame Law School and graduated with honors in 2013. Today, she is a partner at a law firm in Southern Pines, North Carolina, practicing real estate law. She and Isaac have two daughters, Lillian (10) and Isabelle (8). “We all love coming back to Grant County about once a year to visit family!” The values, lessons, and relationships they built in Grant County continue to guide them both personally and professionally. Michelle and Isaac are both proud to be graduates of Grant Union High School—GO PROSPECTORS!

