

Bellevue
Public
Schools



Alumni
Spotlight



Jennifer Wilson (Lee)

Bellevue West, 1982

Welcome to our new Alumni Spotlight column where we shine a light on some of the amazing alumni that have graduated from Bellevue Public Schools!

Did you know that one of the “most powerful people in accounting” lives in Bellevue and attended Bellevue Public Schools?

Jennifer Wilson (Lee) is a 1982 graduate from Bellevue West. Over the last few years she has been consistently recognized as.... “One of the Most Powerful Women in Accounting”, one of Accounting Today's “Top 100 Most Influential People in Accounting”, and one of INSIDE Public Accountings “Top 10 Most Recommended Consultants”.

Jennifer recently took some time to answer a few of our questions.

What schools did you attend in Bellevue and what year did you graduate?

I went to Birchcrest from K-2, Twin Ridge grades 3-6, Logan 7-9 and Bellevue West High School from grades 10-12. I graduated in 1982.



Jennifer in the Thunderettes her junior year.

Could you name one (or a couple) of your favorite teachers and share why they were your favorite?

Michael Purdy taught me to type on a typewriter with accuracy and real speed and I have leveraged those skills to my writing and blogging, responding to a tremendous volume of email each day, and participating in social media. Mr. Austin, whose first name I don't know, was my English teacher in 8th or 9th grade. He gave me the love of public speaking and helped refine my presentation skills – and I use ideas he gave me to this day. Carrie Feingold taught me a true love of literature. Lori Grant introduced me to business, encouraged me to lead FBLA, helped me win a state championship, took me to Nationals and later came to work with me as a contractor after retirement to help my organization launch our first online course on Professionalism. My BPS education provided me an incredible foundation and is the reason that my husband, Brian Wilson, a BPS alumni, and I moved home from S. CA to raise our girls.

What is a good memory you could share from your time in school?

I had the best time with so many of my classmates and worked as hard at fun as I did at learning. BPS gave me a life-long best friend in Terri Rodgers, who later became Theresa Giustra, someone very dear to me who has recently passed away. I also attended my senior prom on a double date with my now husband – him with another date and me, too. I owe BPS for my friendship with Brian, my husband of 30 years in May 2019.

Did you have a favorite place to hang out - either at school or in town?

We had a lot of awesome parties at my parents house and at our cabin on the Platte River.

Did you have a favorite class?

Probably my Office Services class in Business and all of my English classes.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

A doctor.

Did you have other family that graduated from BPS?

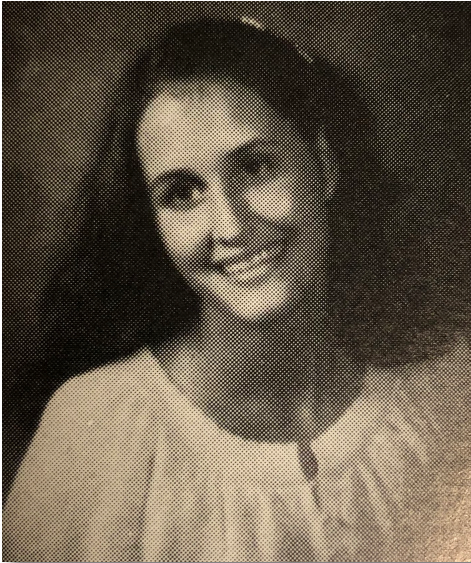
Yes! Four of my five siblings: Jack Lee (1976), Bill Lee (1978), Ruth Lee Richter (1979), and Mary Lee Reavis (1986).

Do you still have family in the area?

Yes, Bill, Ruth and Mary still live in Bellevue and we all had or have children in BPS.

Where did you attend college and what was your major?

I attended Creighton on a scholarship studying biology. After 18 months, I realized that I wasn't inspired by what I was learning and I shifted my major to business and moved to UNO. Shortly after transferring, I went to work for an accounting software start up and found my way into accounting technology. I was given the opportunity to follow my job to S. CA in my junior year and I left college to pursue my dream to live at the beach. My career took off from there and I didn't find my way back to college until after the birth of my first child, Della, in 1998. I went part-time at UNO



while starting up the business I have now and graduated in 2002. While I don't necessarily encourage this non-traditional path, I am so grateful for the path I took and the incredible career opportunities I had because of my willingness to leave school in 1986.

Where did you end up after college?

Before I finished school, I spent a year in Long Beach, then 8 more in Mission Viejo, CA. I worked for an accounting software distributor the first year in Long Beach, then moved to Sage Software where I was the VP of Sale and Customer Services. I helped take that company public and had the most incredible experience in the high-growth, Wild, Wild West of that first microcomputer transformation in our country.

Starting up a business can be a huge risk. Why did you decide to start your own business?

I had left Sage and was running a national consulting practice for a top CPA firm. I didn't feel that my plans to start a family and still travel nationally was supported by my superiors. I knew I could have it all, but back then, they weren't that sure. So, I started ConvergenceCoaching so I can make a big difference, have a big job and raise my family, too. And, this business is completely virtual, completely flexible, with unlimited PTO and all of our assets in the cloud before it was called the cloud. Turns out, this business model is attractive to other powerful women (and one man) and we have grown our national leadership consulting practice inside the CPA profession.

Could you explain what ConvergenceCoaching is? What services do you offer and, if you are at liberty to say, who are some of your more well know clients?

We develop transformational leaders in the accounting profession one person at a time. We are a leadership and



management consulting practice working exclusively within the accounting profession. We conduct strategic vision plans, coach CEOs and executive committees on implementation, we help transform teams and drive change and we have programs that develop leadership skills in the next generation of leaders. I teach, speak and facilitate nationally, so travel extensively, When I'm home in Bellevue, I coach and facilitate via video and by phone. I also process our profession's challenges in writing, writing regular columns for the Journal of Accountancy and Accounting Today. I say things that others don't always want to hear about the changes that future leaders most want to see, and so I have been a voice for NextGen leaders, working to wake up my peers to the cultural shifts needed to engage NextGen talent and clients. Our clients are local and national CPA firms - too many to name but include BDO USA, Mazars US, Aprio, Green, Hasson & Janks and Wilkin & Guttenplan.

What is the hardest part of owning your own business?

Making sure that I'm balancing working on the business and in the business at the right balance. I am a road warrior and that makes business administration/operations a challenge. This year, we've appointed our first firm administrator to be a higher level leader on the "work on the business" side.

Do you still maintain a blog?

Yes, we have a team blog at www.convergencecoaching.com/blog and I write for it once every 4-6 weeks. I write monthly for the J of A's CPA Insider blog and bi-monthly for Accounting Today's Generational Viewpoints.

What do you see as the key to your many successes?

My parents gave me tons of knowledge transfer and told me I could do and be anything and I believed them. My husband, Brian, believed in me and supported me from the beginning



and 100%. Along the way, I have developed a deep, rich network of friends across the profession and in my personal life, too. I have given freely and still help others whenever I can because I believe the Universe places people in my path for some purpose. I speak my mind and try to raise issues and suggest solutions, without regard to whose feathers may be ruffled by my observations or ideas. I have not tried to win a popularity contest in my work – I've tried instead to drive change, cause improvements, represent the unheard and make a difference where I'm placed. At some point, by the grace of God, people began to listen to my ideas and I was provided a platform for driving change on a greater scale. I also work pretty tirelessly and am grateful for the health and energy to do so.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I hope to continue to be a strategist and voice who is empowering Next Gen strategies and ideas within the CPA profession. My children will all be out of BPS and my husband and I will have the latitude to travel more, or live part time in different locations because my work is not location dependent, so we'll spend more time in the sun, but still be mostly living and working in NE. I hope that my own NextGen leaders will be taking ConvergenceCoaching in directions that they desire and I'll be supporting them in doing so. And, I'll have run at least one more full marathon, have great gardens and, who knows, by then, I may have also carved out the time to write that book.

Which of your accomplishments are you most proud of?

My long friendship, love affair and marriage with my boy, Brian Wilson and the smart, powerful leaders that my children have become.



Jennifer with her husband, Brian, and three daughters.

What message would you like to give to current students in Bellevue Public Schools students?

You can do and be anything with effort and investment in relationships and learning. Invest in learning as much as you can now, when the information is available to you, when you have the time and it's FREE! Your knowledge will become your competitive differentiator. You can also have it all – a big career, a rich family life, hobbies, fun and involvement in your communities – but maybe not all at once. Invest in family (whatever form that takes for you) and make that a priority because it will be your one true constant and probably your most significant legacy. Be grateful and give back to others in honor of your own blessings.

Links

ConvergenceCoaching Website

<http://www.convergencecoaching.com/>

Jennifer's Twitter Account Page

<https://twitter.com/jenleewilson?lang=en>



About Us

The Alumni Spotlight is a recurring feature on the Alumni Association Facebook Page. If you know of a Bellevue graduate that we should shine the spotlight on, please reach out to us and they will be considered for a future column. Continue to invite your friends and family to Like and Follow our Alumni Association page: <https://www.facebook.com/BPSAlumni>

