

In about 1986 my grandfather, Stan Miller, began working at BMS. Throughout the years since then, both of my aunts and my mom also worked here. This school has always been a part of my life and has very much affected what I have done since graduating in 2017.

My years at BMS were full of many good moments and some very challenging. I was given the opportunity to step into leadership roles that I did not feel qualified for, but was encouraged in by staff and faculty. It was here at BMS that I began learning what it meant to live a life of service and was given the chance to practice that.

One of the hardest things that happened to me during my time at BMS also revealed to me the blessing of this community. I debated whether or not to share this part of my life with you this evening, but I feel that it truly acknowledges how impactful this school has been in my life. When my mom got sick and passed away just after my freshman year of high school, it was here that I found comfort from friends and was surrounded by teachers who genuinely cared for me during that time. My brother and I were supported and surrounded by a community of people who prayed for us and encouraged us. The small class size at BMS allows teachers to know their students and to fully invest in them and I am so grateful for how that was displayed to me during my time here.

After graduating from BMS in 2017, I participated in the REACH program, a 9 month mission program based out of Columbus, Ohio. I spent 3 months at the training center in Columbus doing a Discipleship Training School and then went on to spend 6 months overseas. I traveled with a group of 3 other girls to Spain for 3 months where we connected with the local church and encouraged the believers there. We then moved onto Northern Cyprus for 3 months where we participated in worship and prayer nights with believers there and organized English conversation classes at the local university. We also had the opportunity to spend time with several girls from Iraq who had lost family members to Isis. My time in each of these countries taught me a lot about myself and gave me a better perspective of how big the world is and how much bigger our God is.

After completing the REACH program, I interned with them in Columbus for a year as their Food Services Assistant. My year serving in Columbus was a difficult and growing year for me, but gave me the opportunity to serve in ways that I never had before. I was able to step into leadership and was given the opportunity to work with youth.

After interning in Columbus, God guided me back to Big Valley, much to my dismay. After traveling the world, coming home was kind of a disappointment and I can't tell you the amount of times that I prayed that God would open up the doors for me to go elsewhere. Despite my disappointment and discontentment, I tried to make the most of where God had me in that season. I was soon asked to help with Central Pennsylvania Youth Ministries as well as with the Radiate Youth Group at Locust Grove. While I felt very unqualified to serve in either of these roles, I accepted and found so much joy in working with high school youth. God gave me a lot of opportunities to pour into the youth and build relationships and I loved it!

About 2 or 2 ½ years into being back in the valley, I was finally feeling content with where God had me. I loved my job, was active at my church and loved my youth kids. In the spring of 2022, I felt the Lord nudging me to go to Rosedale Bible College. Because I finally loved the season of life that I was in, I was reluctant to listen. I didn't give it much more thought because it didn't feel practical for me to quit my full time job and, at 23, go to college.

The Lord let me forget about it for a few months but then gave me a rude awakening. In late July of 2022 I got word that a friend had passed away very unexpectedly. She was only a few years older than me and she worked at Rosedale in the admissions office. Her passing made me think about how short life is and made me question what more I could be doing. The weekend after Erika passed away was the Rosedale Network of Churches annual Multiply Conference and I had the privilege of attending. It was there that I felt the Lord nudging me yet again to attend Rosedale. I still didn't want to go and tried to come up with every excuse not to, but I felt an unexplainable peace about it.

Listening to the Lord's guidance and going to Rosedale was one of the best things that I have ever done. Rosedale gave me the opportunity to grow in my relationship with the Lord and gave me a greater understanding and appreciation for His Word. It provided me with a community of friends that I know will last a lifetime and again reminded me of the value of doing life with others. Between my years at Rosedale, I was able to work at a summer camp in Minnesota where I worked as a lifeguard and guided canoe trips in the Boundary Waters of Northern Minnesota. Rosedale also opened up doors for me to participate in a 3 week leadership canoe trip in the Canadian wilderness and to go on a 6 week study abroad trip to Turkey, where we took classes and traveled to several Biblical sites in Turkey.

During the fall of my final year at Rosedale, I was starting to think about what I was going to do after I graduated. Gator Camp kept coming to my mind and I decided that I was going to reach out to Chief Greg to see if he had any positions available in the office, thinking that there was almost no chance that he would. It didn't take long for him to get back to me and schedule a time to call. He called me during my Christmas break to discuss a job opportunity and said that he wanted to fly me down to Florida to discuss it in person.

I flew down the first weekend of March, praying that God would make it clear whether or not that was His next step for me. As soon as I got there, I felt an overwhelming peace and excitement. In the beginning of June, just two weeks after graduating from Rosedale, I packed my car and moved to Florida. While it has only been a few months since I got to Camp, it has been an incredible season of life so far.

For those of you who are not familiar with Gator Camp, it is a 15-18 month program for 11-15 year old boys who struggle in school or at home. The boys that we serve come from broken backgrounds and a lot of them have had unimaginable things happen to them in their young lives. While my job is not on the front lines of Camp, it has been a blessing to be able to serve in whatever capacity I can. There have been at least 16 confirmed BMS alumni that have worked at Gator Camp. What an awesome testimony to God's goodness and the ways that He is using both BMS and Gator Camp to further His Kingdom.

God has again blessed me with a wonderful community in this season of my life. Working at Camp has been wonderful, but also very difficult. There is a heaviness that accompanies the type of ministry that Gator Camp is and I am so thankful to have a strong, prayerful community to walk through it with. Please keep us in your prayers as we serve troubled boys in Southwest Florida.

My family and my years here at BMS provided a foundation for my faith that has helped to guide me throughout the last several years. Since graduating, I have been able to see better how God is using BMS to bring up leaders and to further His Kingdom. Thank you to all of the staff and faculty who sacrifice daily to be here and to pour into your students. You are making an impact, even when it may not feel like it.