

Billings Middle School – Alumni Spotlight



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1). Can you describe a specific experience or moment at Billings that still stays with you? Why was it meaningful?

SS: I loved all of the trips. Backpacking, snow camping, rock climbing – it was all amazing. I think I took it for granted while I was there, but now, whenever I tell a story about "on this snow camping trip with my middle school", people are pretty shocked. Same with how PE worked. No one else got to go ice skating or rock climbing during PE.

2). What are you up to now?

SS: I work as a freelance lighting designer and occasionally as a theatrical electrician in NYC. While I mostly design, I'm currently the Master Electrician for a show at the Public

Theater called Sweat. That means that I'm working on the technical and physical side of the lighting – as master electrician, currently I'm doing the paperwork relating to the amount of cable, power, lights, color, etc, and running a crew to make it all happen. I mostly work in lighting design right now -- I'm the person who works with the director and the rest of the design team (scenic, sound, costumes, etc) to come up with the concept for the show, and what I can do with lighting to support the ideas of the show. I then get to the specifics of what sort of lights I want, where I want them to be, what color I want, etc. I pass that information all off to a Master Electrician who makes my ideas come to life in the space. The designer then comes in and focuses all the lights. After that, the designer techs the show and sets the light cues with levels and times. Last summer I was working as a lighting supervisor for the Glimmerglass Festival (an opera festival in upstate New York), helping two different designers (working on four shows!) get their ideas achieved in a shared space.

3). How was your experience transitioning from Billings into high school and to college/the working force from there?

SS: When transitioning to high school, I remember people always asking me if it was a shock to go from such a small middle school to such a big high school (Roosevelt). Really, it wasn't. In any space like that, you find a smaller group of people that you become closer with – no one is trying to be best friends with the whole school, but everyone is looking for a few people to get to know. When I moved to NYC, it was the same thing. Huge city -- but you find a group of people and form your own smaller group.

To learn more about Sarah's work, check out her website: sstolnack.com

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