

Billings Middle School – Alumni Spotlight



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-Andrew Ferguson, class of 2000

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

Despite graduating over 16 years ago, there are several moments that have stuck with me. I went to Billings when it was still located over near Stone. Most people still had dial-up internet at home, but Billings not only had DSL...we also had email addresses and personal web pages...all hosted on a computer located *at the school*. I was definitely on the geek

side of things and I remember hearing about this and wanting to do the same thing at home with my computers. So I convinced my parents to get DSL, and a static IP address (that cost an extra \$5/month) and I pretty quickly figured out how to have my own web server at home. I think this is a great example of the kind of learning that goes on at Billings...it's not just about what you learn in the classroom during formal teaching moments. There is so much to experience and learn in all the in between moments that we often don't consider as "useful", but in reality I think can be even *more* fruitful than rote educational bits.

What are you up to now?

Well, almost an entire *lifetime* later I am the Lead Certification Engineer for the KC-46 Wing Aerial Refueling Pod (WARP) for the USAF new aerial refueling tanker and strategic military transport aircraft. It's basically a flying gas station that can also carry cargo, such as medical evacuations. I am responsible for the getting all the engineering documentation ready for FAA certification. Boeing is a global company with customers and suppliers around the world. The WARPs used on the KC-46 are designed and built by a company in the UK, so lately I've spent a lot of time flying to Europe (Nine times this year. Fun fact, I've spent over a week flying on airplanes this year [171+ hours]) to work with our supplier and their sub-tier suppliers on getting the correct pedigree of engineering documentation--the FAA is very stringent on the level of engineering data that is needed to show compliance.

I've been very fortunate to travel for work even though most jobs don't require it. When they do, it's not usually to anyplace on someone's top 10 list. However, I sought out a position on this team specifically because it offered exposure to international engineering opportunities, which is something I wanted experience in...not just because of the travel opportunities, but because I want to understand how other countries do engineering (and honestly, other non-engineering things too)--something that I believe is an important element to understand in a global economy.

Other random bits: We have a dog named Ezra; I'm a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Washington; I started at Boeing in 2006 as an intern in college; I'd love to be a teacher at some point (in theory), or at least teach a class, because I believe sharing what I know with people is just as important as being an engineer.

Learn more about Andrew and his exciting career by checking out his blog: andrewferguson.net

Interested in being a featured alumni in an upcoming newsletter? [Email Riley Burns.](mailto:Riley.Burns@boeing.com)