



Travis Howell

Garden Plain High School 1998

Travis Howell is a Wildland Fire Suppression Specialist with the Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service.

What degree(s) have you received since your graduation from Renwick and what schools did you attend?

After graduating from Garden Plain High School in 1998, I obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point. I then served as an officer in the Army for five years, and after my discharge I attended a number of other schools for firefighting in Alaska and the New Zealand Fire Service Firefighter School. As a result I have a number of firefighting qualifications in both the United States and New Zealand.

What do you enjoy the most about your chosen profession?

Without a doubt, the lifestyle flexibility and the ability to work all over the world as a wildland firefighter. Wildland firefighters typically earn a year's worth of salary during the busy fire season summer months in the western US. This allows me to not need to work around half the year each year. My wife and I have taken advantage of this lifestyle and live in New Zealand half the year when not working at the Alaska Fire Service each summer. Also, firefighting qualifications and skills are recognized in a number of other countries so I have been able to work as a firefighter in New Zealand and Australia.

Was there a teacher who made a positive impact you or helped direct your path when you were a Renwick student? How did they inspire you?

For me, there was not a single teacher that stood out as I think that all of them made a positive impact on me. Rather than help direct my path, they created an environment for me to determine that myself and once I had done so fully supported me to achieve my goals. In my case, that was successfully being accepted into West Point and taking courses in high school which prepared me for that.

Any advice you have to offer for current Renwick students as they prepare for their future after high school?

My first bit of advice is for current students is to really consider if college is something that is right for you immediately following high school. There are lots of opportunities to work, travel, and explore different parts of the United States and places all over the world when you are younger and college is something that will always be there for you to pursue at anytime in your life. While some people figure out what career field they want to pursue immediately after high school while in college, for a lot of people it takes a bit of life experience and exploration to find out what they enjoy and what they want to pursue in life. Figure out what you want for yourself and don't let people persuade you from pursuing what you want to do with your life.

What kind of a difference did your time as a student at Renwick make for you?

The ability and freedom to take course and participate in extracurricular activities, which helped me prepare for my future goals at the time.

Do you know someone who is *Renwick Made*? Help us share their story by emailing anne.maxwell@usd267.com.