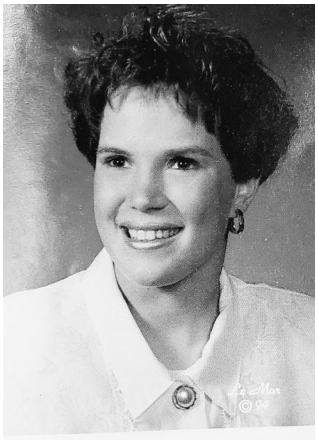
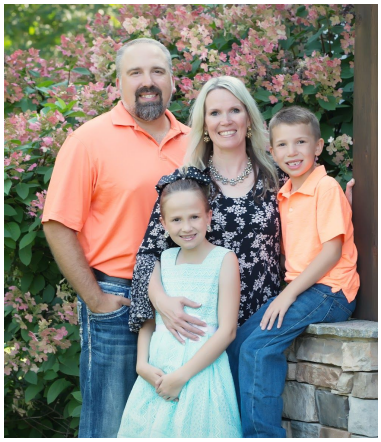

Sara Lokstad

Class of 1994

As many of you who are reading this article know, I grew up in the Newfolden community on a small farm. My parents, David and Judy, worked diligently to teach me the value of hard work and the fruits that labor would produce. Growing up on the farm, I loved to ride in the tractor and other farm machinery with my dad. As the time to start Kindergarten approached, I remember being apprehensive, yet excited, about starting school. My fears were somewhat alleviated as my grandpa, Arnold Skjerven, drove the bus. At least I had a familiar face! My first teacher was Mary Anderson, a great start and introduction to school! After that year, there were so many others. Of course, everyone knows and loves Miss Huglen. She taught five of the seven siblings in my family, as well as my father. She remains so special to our family today. I have so many wonderful memories from elementary school such as kickball on the playground, going to Old Mill State Park on the last day of school, the sixth-grade class trip to Minnehaha Falls, the State Capital and of course, the Twins game. One of my favorite times during my elementary years was Halloween Day. We all would get dressed up in our costumes and would parade around from one classroom to the next, displaying our costumes for our school mates. This of course was followed by tasty treats, usually candy and cupcakes. I used to love singing the spooky songs in Mrs. Klopp's music class too. What a great memory to this day!

In addition to school work, sports were such a fun part of my life in my younger years. One of my favorite sports movies of all time is Hoosiers. I have watched that movie fifty times or more, but when I watch it, it reminds me so much of home and the 1987 girls basketball team going to state. I remember the pride I felt at being a Nordic and part of Newfolden/MCC. Back then, it was A and AA, a much different and more difficult path to get to the state tournament. Even at my elementary age, I could feel what an accomplishment this was. I wish I could say I was a player on that team, but I appreciate being a part of that history of our school. After all, we had the coolest mascot because ours matched the Minnesota Vikings!!! 😊

For many students elsewhere, high school starts at 9th grade, but in Newfolden, this started after 6th grade. I was nervous about that too. The foundation that had been started in elementary carried on into high school. We had many wonderful, dedicated teachers in grades 7-12! Mrs. Nelson was our music teacher at that time. She put in SO MANY extra hours for us kids. I don't know how many parents

understand just how many hours outside of school she dedicated to her students. She pushed us hard, but she gave you all the time you wanted to develop your talent and did not ask anything in return. Miss Bradseth (now Mrs. Hane), and Mrs. Nelson put in many long hours for our musicals over the years as well.

Many of the teachers and coaches at Marshall County Central put in so much extra time and dedication. Mrs. Dahl, our beloved Spanish teacher, made classes so much fun. We looked forward to going to her class each day. Mr. Pederson, Mr. Jorgenson, Mr. Ueland, and Mr. Mjelde all put in so much into their coaching and teaching outside of a normal work day. I would be remiss if I didn't mention our school principal and superintendent, Mr. Paggen. I know he also put in many hours for the students and truly cared about what happened to each and every one of us... and still does!

Many of you also recall the fire in 1991 that burned down the high school. For whatever reason, I woke up early that morning and heard my radio playing "Newfolden High School is in flames, big flames." It still seems somewhat surreal to think that actually happened. I am still impressed by how the community banded together and not long after the fire, we were having classes in the community center, churches and elementary. It was like a college campus around town! I am so glad that we fought and won the battle to rebuild our school.

As I have gotten older and further away from high school years, I still feel like Newfolden is home. I truly feel I grew up in one of the best places to live in the country – a close, tight knit, faith-based community. People genuinely cared for each other and they cared about the school in it. Many of the teachers grew up in or around the area and were dedicated, hardworking individuals. Their commitment to the students was paramount to our success. Now that I am older, I realize and truly appreciate that so much more and am truly grateful. My husband Mike and I work to instill these values in our children, Madeline and Samuel.

After graduation, I attended the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. At first, I'll admit, I was a bit intimidated and didn't think that I was as smart or as "good" as the other students there. After a while, I realized that this could not be further from the truth and that my school, Marshall County Central, had prepared me well. This June, I will have 20 years serving in the United States Army. I currently work as board-certified physician and serve in leadership for Essentia Health. I am so grateful for my school, teachers, community, parents, church and most of all, my Heavenly Father for providing these opportunities.

To the current students at Marshall County Central, know that your school is preparing you well for your future. Keep a positive attitude, avoid those who are negative and bring you down. Work hard and the sky is truly the limit. Go Freeze!

Note: Sara is currently a Lt. Colonel in the Army. She has been deployed 3 times, once to Iraq and twice to Kuwait. Please join me in thanking Sara for her service.