



Coming Full Circle

CHRISTINE COOK
Kindergarten Teacher
at MHS and Mom,
MHS Class of 1981

Chris Cook knows firsthand how difficult it is for a child to be apart from his/her parents – and for that parent to be apart from his/her child. After all, her own caring and committed mother made the difficult decision to send her son and daughter to MHS for the opportunities it afforded them that she alone would not be able to provide. Despite the fact that she wanted to go to MHS, Chris was close to her mom and the separation was hard.

This knowledge makes Chris the understanding bridge between children and parents throughout their kindergarten year at MHS. To make the separation easier for parent and child, she tries to keep the students and parents connected. Students send home letters and pictures of their new experiences. She helps the children make videos to share with their families at the end of the year. She communicates regularly with the families and finds ways for the parents to stay involved. She, like other teachers at MHS, sees her role as being much more than just a teacher, and gets involved in their lives inside and outside the classroom.

Chris learned the importance of giving back to others while a student at MHS. Early in her career, at a homecoming for MHS, she was encouraged to submit her resume to the school. A few months later, when a position became available, Chris jumped at

the opportunity to be a part of the school community again and contribute to the mission. Twenty-three years later, Chris still teaches at MHS and is grateful everyday that she has an opportunity to be a part of the school's legacy. Interestingly, her husband also works at the school, in the Supply Center, as did both of his parents.

Chris was a member of the first co-educational class of students. "When I was at MHS, the teachers did more than instruct a class, they were mentors. They were always there to offer advice, talk to you during a free period, or take you out on the weekend. They were approachable and personable." Her houseparents, even though they ran a strict household, are still among her best friends.

Chris has two children of her own, fulfilling her lifelong goal to be a wife and mom. They are in ninth and 11th grade and attend local schools. Chris makes sure that she teaches them to value the things they have – such as having a mother and father. "They are aware that they are lucky with what they have. They are not into material things."

In the evenings and on weekends, Chris, her husband and her children socialize with MHS students, visiting the school, taking them out on weekends, playing sports, becoming friends and forming bonds.

When Chris looks across her class of kindergartners in her MHS classroom, she is reminded every day of her passion for fulfilling the mission of Milton Hershey. "The mission of the school is bigger than anything, and to be a part of that is amazing."