

Feature

Female Architect Leads Career Academy

By Renae Hoffmann Walker



Kim Kelsey has designed buildings since she was a child. "I'd make models out of cardboard," said Kelsey. "One of my houses was shaped like a diamond. I remember going to the hardware store to buy paint chip samples for the walls!"

Kelsey grew up in Wisconsin, the youngest of four girls. Her dad assembles farm machinery and her mom is a nurse. While small town life offered Kelsey opportunities in sports, she wasn't able to explore her interest in architecture until high school. "My art and technical education teachers created an independent study for me in architectural drafting," said Kelsey. "I rendered the exterior of a house from a two-dimensional plan to a 3-D project."

While playing college volleyball, Kelsey took classes in commercial art and environmental design at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. She finished a Bachelor of Art in architecture at the University of Illinois, followed by additional schooling to complete her Master of Art so she could pursue certification and licensure in multiple states. Then, Kelsey and her boyfriend moved to Appleton, Wis., and got married.

While in Wisconsin, Kelsey worked on several school projects. "I've done residential work, office buildings and a day care, but those aren't as satisfying as working on a school," said Kelsey. "Seeing kids use the building and knowing I'm affecting the environment in which they learn is very rewarding for me!"

Kelsey says the new high school Career Academy under construction on the BSC campus is challenging because the shop space must be integrated with classrooms and hands on, real-life learning, so the building design has to be flexible. The new facility will be open in the fall.

Kelsey works for R.L. Engebretson in Fargo, the major shareholder of Tvenge Architects/Planners in Bismarck. She drives here every week to review the building progress.

She and Troy have two preschoolers, Noah, 3; and Cole, 1. Her future goal is to mentor future architects. "It's important for kids to know that when you get out, you're not a licensed architect," said Kelsey. "You have to intern for three years and sit for seven exams. It takes dedication and commitment, but it's worth it!" **EM**

Renee Hoffmann Walker enjoys writing and public speaking as a former news reporter and now as community relations director for Bismarck Public Schools.



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