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**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

# NEWS RELEASE

## *KPBSD graduate inspiration: Kelly King Nikiski Middle-High School, Class of 1999*

Born and raised in Alaska, Kelly King now serves one of our most vulnerable and invisible populations on the Kenai Peninsula—youth who experience homelessness, and lack a stable place to sleep at night.

*"It can be daunting to be bold in who you are, what you're interested in, and what you want to go after—especially as a teenager that just wants to fit in.*

*But the things that might make you feel out of place in high school can be the very things you're most proud of as an adult or that have the biggest impact on the world around you."*

Say 'yes' to you.

*Kelly King*

NIKISKI MIDDLE-HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 1999  
 KPBSD GRADUATE INSPIRATION

When she graduated from Nikiski Middle-High School in 1999, after elementary years at (Nikiski) North Star, she headed north to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. She's now in her eleventh year working in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District as the KPBSD Students in Transition Program Coordinator and Central Peninsula Homeless Liaison.

Early years with her parents deeply influenced her professional life path. She said, "I watched them actively care for and about people throughout my childhood, and I always knew I wanted to contribute to my neighbors and my community in the same way. I see the value in people looking out for each other. My mom and dad spent a lot of time, energy, and resources building into people's lives and I was always inspired by the outcome of love they brought to the table."

**"Say 'yes' to you."** It can be daunting to be bold in who you are, what you are interested in, and what you want to go after—especially as a teenager that just wants to fit in. But the things that might make

**KPBSD: ONE DISTRICT, FORTY-FOUR DIVERSE SCHOOLS**

**The mission of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is to empower all learners to positively shape their futures.**

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you feel out of place in high school can be the very things you are most proud of as an adult or that have the biggest impact on the world around you.

### **Teachers who care change the world**

“I was an extremely shy child and because of that, going to school was really difficult for me. Academics were comfortable and came naturally, but the social aspect was overwhelming and produced a lot of anxiety. In middle school, I really struggled with feeling like I fit in or had a place to claim—but teachers at Nikiski, some whom I had no classes with, noticed and went out of their way to engage with me. Phil Morin, Vern Kornstad, and Lori Manion reached out to me from a place that had nothing to do with academics, but everything to do with connection. They spent time getting me involved, fostering my self-confidence, and building a sense of belonging. They shifted my perspective of myself and that changed my entire school experience moving forward. I was blessed to work these amazing people after coming back to KPBSD and I saw how they had similar, beautiful impacts on so many other students’ lives.

### **Meaningful work in the world**

I believe in the work I am doing, and see the continual need in our community for supports. Homelessness in Alaska, and on the Peninsula specifically, is an issue that is often overlooked and misunderstood. I want to be a part in changing that dialogue. I am proud of the program we have in place and our push to provide quality services, to be innovative with the resources we have, and to ensure students and families experiencing homelessness trust they have an advocate. When I see students who have been a part of the SIT Program living successful, productive, joyful lives, or when I hear from families that something we offered made even a small difference in a moment they really needed that support, it fills me up. I have no doubt I am where I supposed to be and I am thankful for the opportunity to be here every day.

### **Unplugged play and fun**

We are so lucky to live in Alaska, aren’t we? Every day we wake up in a place that is on so many *Bucket Lists*—I try to soak it up and soak it in as often as possible! I love to adventure with friends and family, take road trips, snowshoe and cabin camp in the winter, and anything on, in, or near the water. I totally dig live music and am excited by the festivals and events popping up locally over the last few years. I also work really hard to make it to Maui each year—I’m pretty sure palm trees are my “spirit animal.”

### **Living with service as a high value**

Earlier this year I joined the local [100 Women Who Care](#), and it has been awesome to see what a powerful impact this group of compassionate, community-minded women are making right here at home. I volunteer for the local Relay for Life and am helping organize the Brewery to Bathroom 0.5k fundraiser this year, as well as an upcoming event for KPAL (Kenai Peninsula Animal Lovers) Rescue. There are so many worthy causes and opportunities to get involved in our community; I would really encourage people to find what speaks to them and then find a way to plug in. One of the things that has always made me proud to be from Nikiski and the Peninsula in general is the way people show up for each other—get in on the action!

### **Links**

- [KPBSD Students in Transition](#) Facebook page
- [KPBSD Students in Transition \(SIT Program\)](#) webpage
- [100 Women Who Care – Kenai and Soldotna](#)
- [100 Women Who Care – Homer](#)

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