

Past Student Spotlight

Melissa Burton (1986)



Although I only attended St George High School for Grade 12, the memories of that year are always with me. My Mum (Ms Ellen Baird) was a teacher at the high school and after spending Grade 11 in a boarding school, I was very ready for something different (and St George did not disappoint!). The Grade 12 class welcomed me as one of their own and I'd eventually end up serving as School Vice-Captain and Captain of the Nixon sports team (go green and white!). The friends I made at St George High remain some of my most favorite people in the world!

After leaving St George, Mum and I returned to the States (USA). I got an undergraduate degree in industrial psychology and then both Mum and I graduated, at the same time, with a Master of Public Administration degree (it was the first time a mother and daughter had graduated in the same class at Akron U). I was always drawn to public service, so I moved to Washington DC in 1996 and have been here ever since.

My career adventures in America's capital have included working for the U.S. Department of Education (including managing the Fulbright-Hays and Javits fellowships); the U.S. Mint (the agency that makes all U.S. coin); the Federal Emergency Management Agency (where I was on 9/11 when the plane hit the Pentagon); and currently as the Director of Regulatory Support for the Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Rulemaking.

Earlier this year, I was lucky enough to visit St George and get together with a few of my Grade 12 mates ... it was as if time had stood still. They remain the same wonderful, irreverent, kind, and hilarious people they've always been (and I find real comfort in knowing that some things, and people, do not change). We're already planning our 40th reunion for May of 2026 and I am counting down the days until I am again raising a glass with the amazing Class of 1986.

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