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**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

# NEWS RELEASE

## *KPBSD Inspiration: Kristin (Beck) Bates*

**“A combination of opportunities I had while attending Seward schools sent me into a salmon spiral,” said Kristin Beck Bates, a Seward High graduate who attended Nikiski Elementary, K-Beach Elementary, Seward Elementary, Seward Middle School, and graduated in 2004.**

Kristin, now the hatchery manager at Trail Lakes Hatchery north of Moose Pass, Alaska, explains, “We have 3 million smolt (fingerling) sized fish on site and every day they need to be fed, their tanks cleaned, and monitored. It gives me a daily purpose, and knowing that these sockeye and coho are someday going to fill the freezers of my fellow Alaskans makes me work even harder to make sure they are healthy and happy. When working with live animals, no one ever gets a day off. It is a 24/7 job to make sure we are here in case of emergencies. It may sound corny, but these slimy little critters are family and I enjoy seeing them develop and grow from the moment they are fertilized as eggs to releasing them into the ocean. Saying goodbye is always the hardest part!”

### **Experiential learning**

Participating in *Take Your Kid to Work Day* (with Phillis Shoemaker) at the Institute of Marine Science (IMS) during elementary school taught Kristin to siphon out king crab tanks at a very young age. A member of the ocean based learning group called Youth Area Watch with teacher Mark Swanson, she said, “A highlight was helping scientists ID orca whales in Resurrection Bay! In high school, I had internships for credit at the Alaska Sealife Center (set up by teacher Dan Krier) and the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery with Jeff Hettrick. I later enjoyed an oceanography class that included a trip to the University of Hawaii, Hilo, where we caught sea cucumbers for research. Seward’s annual Silver Salmon Derby had me star struck every summer catching beautiful coho, but one memory I won’t forget when I was about 15, was going to the Bear Creek Weir near Seward and asking future coworker Cathy Cline how to get a job working with fish and doing what they did with salmon. I remember her saying, ‘stay in school, come back and see me when you are 18,’ and describing how incredible working at the weir was. Now at 32, I manage the Bear Creek Weir and look back at all the experiences I had while growing up in KPBSD’s schools!”

Bates believes, “The world is growing in size and I can use my skills to raise healthy fish to put out into our oceans. By doing the best I can while the small fish are in the hatchery, it means they will have a better chance at surviving their crazy ocean life. I feel like my part is small in the ‘bigger picture’ of salmon resources globally, but in some way I am helping feed the world and Alaskans. I have strong environmental ethics and want to use them to better our great state. I want to work towards making hatcheries more eco-friendly, maximize production through new technology, and work with the local communities to see what ideas they have for bringing fish hatcheries closer to their coastal waters.”

**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.**

ANCHOR POINT COOPER LANDING HOMER HOPE KACHEMAK SELO KENAI MOOSE PASS NANWALEK NIKISKI NIKOLAEVSK NINILCHIK PORT GRAHAM  
RAZDOLNA SELDOVIA SEWARD SOLDOTNA STERLING TUSTUMENA TYONEK VOZNESENKA

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### **Inspiration: sit on a boat for 20 hours**

“Fishing with my Dad as a child in Seward inspired me. I still don’t eat bologna and processed American cheese sandwiches, but I could sit out on a boat for 20 hours a day trying to catch one of those amazing silver salmon! I have other siblings that would opt out of fishing, but I was in the boat every chance I could get. I hold these memories close of me and my Dad. I want every person to be able to fish for salmon on the Kenai Peninsula in years to come. This drives me to think of new ideas and innovative ways to bring more fish to local waters. A career in fisheries is challenging every day. I am lucky to be practicing my skills right at home here on the Kenai Peninsula. Having my family close, working with salmon stocks that I grew up fishing for, and educating the people in communities that I care about—this really makes my life complete. Because of all of these details, I know that I am right where I am supposed to be. I do not know where my career is going to take me, but as long as I am advocating for the states salmon resources, I know that I will be doing meaningful work for the people of Alaska.”

### **Life advice for K-12 students**

“Stick with it. Looking back it wasn’t as hard as I thought while in the moment. There are teachers who truly care about you—lean on those special ones to give you life advice and help guide your future. Put yourself first. Every time. Lastly, do not lose touch with those teachers who gave you an extra hand. They will not ever stop caring about you and can be a resource well into the future!”

### **Heartfelt thank you to Seward High School teachers:**

“Through the diverse opportunities you gave me to get out and explore our community and career paths, I found something truly unique. Now I get to directly give back to the Kenai Peninsula in a very humbling way. I could not have done it without you and I strive to make you all proud! Dan Krier, Martha Fleming, Stephanie Cronin, and my many sports coaches, I owe you one for getting me through school! I wanted to quit many times, but because of your dedication to your students, I kept coming back. Special shout out to my Mom, retired (yet still teaching) KPBSD teacher Laura Beck, her special connection to her students and her kids really made me into who I am today: a science nerd, who also loves educating!”

### **Education beyond KPBSD**

- University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho
  - Fishery Resources: Managing fish populations to ensure that they are healthy and sustainable
  - Wildlife Resources: Managing wildlife resources to make sure populations are healthy and that people and nature can stay balanced overtime.
- University of Phoenix (2017), MBA. “I wanted to add a higher degree that would make me into a well-rounded employee and manager.”

### **Connect with Kristin**

Kristin began working for Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) in 2014, as the assistant Hatchery Manager at Trail Lakes Hatchery, just north of Moose Pass, Alaska. In 2017, she was promoted to Hatchery Manager. Kristin says, “We raise sockeye (14 million annually) and coho salmon (500,000 annually) for many user groups on the Kenai Peninsula. CIAA provides and protects your salmon resource through hatchery enhancement and habitat rehabilitation and protection.”

- <http://www.ciaa.net.org>;
- <https://www.facebook.com/CIAA1976>
- Seward High News: <https://shstoday.org/>

KPBSD celebrates Kristin Bates who is proof positive of the KPBSD mission to empower all learners to positively shape their futures.

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