

## **ALUMNI OF THE MONTH**

**Name:** Rae El Whitman

**Year of Graduation:** 2000

### **What have you done since graduating from Port Allegany High School?**

After graduating from Port Allegany High School, I attended Slippery Rock University on a volleyball and track and field scholarship. I participated in both sports for all four years while I earned a dual degree in Health and Physical Education. The ability to compete at the collegiate level in two sports is what enticed me to pursue a four year degree, but after battling sport related injuries...my passion quickly turned into my major and studying ways to keep future athletes safe throughout their athletic careers.

I graduated from SRU in December of 2004 and came home to a long term substitute position at Northern Potter School District. I was hired by the Kane Area School District in June for a Health and Physical Education position at the middle school level. While teaching and coaching, I have been able to earn a master's degree in high performance training and injury prevention and a second master's degree in sports psychology.

I have been fortunate, to have what I consider to be many successes within the educational and coaching capacities, but I still feel my greatest accomplishments have occurred within my own home. I "hit the jackpot" when Danyelle Whitman agreed to be my wife, and we have been blessed with the opportunity to adopt two beautiful girls; Inley and Tagelynn.

### **Where do you currently live?**

Kane, Pennsylvania

### **Who was your favorite teacher in high school? Why were they your favorite?**

I had several teachers who impacted me throughout my journey at PAHS. Mr. and Mrs. Myers instilled a passion for music and performance that resonates deep within my soul. Mr. Budd always reinforced that perfection wasn't necessary, but anything less than my best was unacceptable. All of my coaches encouraged proper people skills, lessons on perseverance, and they also showed me how proper execution was the key to success. In the classroom, however, no one was able to reach me quite like Chantal Connor Williams did. She had a way of making me realize that I could be successful in the classroom, if I attacked my academic work with the same effort and passion that I attacked my athletic endeavors with.

## **What is your fondest memory of Port Allegany High School?**

In general, I feel very fortunate to have been a student athlete at PAHS from 1996-2000. I felt like there was a fantastic culture of acceptance and inclusion that allowed people from all walks of life to openly be a part of our school community. I also feel like there were some really great leaders who chose to lead in a positive direction, and an awesome group of people who chose to follow those leaders. This atmosphere was evident at school dances, athletic competitions and musical performances where we often had a “packed house” that was filled with supportive and positive crowds. I can remember running into a gymnasium as an athlete...to a student section filled with hunter orange, and Eric Rees or our cheerleaders leading the crowd to some kind of crazy cheer. I felt like we were genuinely united as students and I always remember our community being behind us as well. I cannot remember a night where we didn’t fill the auditorium to “standing room only” for a musical performance.

Another very specific memory, would have to be riding the bus home after winning a District 9 Volleyball Championship and having the Fire Department give us an escort into town and back up to the school.



