

Meet the 2022 CEF Honored Alumni, Justin and Kelly Heyboer

Justin and Kelly Heyboer's story is one of two high school friends marrying, starting a family, and creating a successful business all right here in Caledonia. Justin was born and raised on a horse farm and attended Dutton Elementary, Caledonia Middle, and Caledonia High School. Kelly moved to Caledonia in 6th grade from the "city". As a new student, Kelly recalls the first person she met, "Peg Mulherin was my homeroom teacher. She was super welcoming, energetic, and boisterous." Kelly wanted to be a teacher since age 9 and Peg was one of the teachers that Kelly admired.



Justin and Kelly lived right around the corner from each other and had mutual friends but didn't really get to know each other until late in high school. Sports were integral parts of their school years. In track, Kelly ran the 100 and 200

meter dash, the 4 x100m and 4 x200m relays and high jumped. Her coach, Joe Zomerlei, made an impact on her as he taught a hard work ethic and pushed her to always do her best. He is now coaching the couple's 11th grade daughter, Brooke, who he often accidentally calls "Kelly".



*Brooke, Joe Zomerlei, and Kelly
Enjoying a recent track banquet.*

Justin started playing football in 5th grade and continued through high school. He was both a running back and receiver. Coach Ralph Shefferly made an impact on Justin through his football career and taught him life lessons as well. Both Kelly and Justin valued the mentors they had relationships with throughout their school years. Justin also played basketball in middle school. The couple both enjoyed working and playing hard in addition to the camaraderie shared with teammates. Sports taught them to push themselves to be even better and that some of the biggest lessons are learned when the game is lost.

Academics were more of a priority for Kelly while Justin poured his time into networking with friends which is a skill he still uses today in his business. Justin actually had his



own TV show on the Caledonia news channel interviewing various people including Ted Nugent! FFA was an integral program for Justin. Advisors Al and Jackie Steeby mentored him and contributed a great deal to making him the man, businessman, and leader that he is today.

In 1996, Justin won the

title of "Star State Agri Businessman of the Year," which is a very high honor in FFA. Justin graduated in 1995 and attended Michigan State University's Landscape and Horticulture Program for two years. He developed his love for planting and gardening. This passion started with his mowing business that began at age 15. He grew it into a thriving landscaping business over the years.



*Justin with former FFA Advisor,
Al Steeby*

Kelly and Justin had a few mutual friends in high school, and lived right around the corner from each other, but it wasn't until Justin came to Kelly's graduation party in 1996, that Justin took the step to ask Kelly to the beach the next day.

They continued to date and married in 1998 while Kelly was attending Calvin College. She graduated in 2000 with a degree in Elementary Education and Language Arts. Using her degree, she taught in a Kentwood Elementary School for 18 years and completed her Master's Degree in Literacy in 2010.



Justin and Kelly are people of faith and family. In 2002, they bought a charming old house and barn on Snow Avenue as they desired to raise a family on a hobby farm. The couple was pregnant with their first son Luke, who was born in 2003, and later had a daughter, Brooke in 2006, and another son, Colt in 2008. The couple was excited to give their children a Caledonia Schools education where they have and continue to build relationships with some of the same teachers as their parents. They take great pride in their children and count them as one of their greatest blessings. Kelly remarks, "Watching them become young adults, work hard, be honest and humble, and love Jesus is our greatest joy!"

2022 CEF Honored Alumni, Justin and Kelly Heyboer continued

When barn weddings started to become a trend around 15 years ago, the couple hosted a wedding in the Wildwood barn. Consequently, the next year, a guest of that wedding requested to get married in the barn. Justin and Kelly began to see the need for an event venue which was not their initial intent. In 2010, they remodeled the barn and started booking more events. Each year the amount of events seemed to double, so in 2018, Kelly retired from teaching and Justin sold his landscaping portion of the business. Wildwood Family Farms became a sought out event venue with rave reviews. Kelly explains, "We see the customer's need and adapt to what we need as owners and what our guests need as guests. We love creating new spaces and offering a unique experience in a small town."

They thrive on serving people and using their visions to create events that people from all over the world will enjoy and remember. The couple designs events together but Kelly focuses on the planning and floral services and Justin maintains the grounds and secures the entertainment portion including food, drinks, and music. They book over 50+ events each year including weddings, corporate events, farm to table dinners, and concerts. They have built their business for over 20 years with mostly small accomplishments and a few larger ones but they both agree that some of their failures have taught more



than their successes. Owning a business is tough, but the flexibility and ability to make their own schedules and decisions while finding what works best for their family, business, and customers is something they are enjoying in this journey.

Giving back to the community is a priority for the Heyboers. In addition to their private events, they host public concerts and events each month. They enjoy seeing many faces at Wildwood and appreciate the support of the community that has helped it to thrive. Many times they give their time, resources, and finances to support a cause. They support many organizations within the school district such as FFA, athletics, and PTO initiatives. The Caledonia Education Foundation is also grateful to them for supporting many years of their fundraising events (Foundation Fest and now Calaplaoza)

and establishing a scholarship for a graduating senior who is interested in pursuing a career in the agriscience or hospitality field. By empowering our Caledonia students and staff, it is just one more way Justin and Kelly are building a stronger community.

For all these reasons, Kelly Heyboer, Caledonia High School Class of 1996, and Justin Heyboer, Caledonia Class of 1995 have been chosen together as the 2022 Caledonia Education Foundation Honored Alumni. They both will be recognized at 6:30 pm at CALAPALOOZA and at the halftime of the Homecoming football game on Sept 30th at the Caledonia High School Football Stadium.



*The Heyboer Family
Brooke, Colt, Justin, Kelly, and Luke*

Photo courtesy of Kristy TerHaar