

Tammy (Jones) Gillette

Name: Tammie (Jones) Gillette

Graduation Year: 1981

Job Title: Base Helicopter Pilot

Organization/Company Name: GMR/Air Evac Lifeteam #35

Location of Employment: Marion, Illinois

Brief Description of Job Responsibilities:

Helicopter pilot; operating a single-pilot EMS helicopter with two med-crew, 1 nurse/1 paramedic. I'm responsible for the safe transport of crew and patient during emergency transfer to higher level of care. These transports can be between two facilities or from a scene/accident location to an appropriate facility.

Describe your journey since graduating from Prairie High School, including any significant career milestones or educational achievements. How did your experience at Prairie prepare you for your current endeavors?

Right out of high school, my plan was to be a hairstylist. I completed beauty school and realized after 4 months of working in the industry, that it was not for me. I married fellow Prairie student Mike Gillette in 1982. The next couple decades we moved around the country and raised our 4 children.

At the age of 42, after supporting my husband's career climbs, he suggested it was my turn for college. He was on staff with University of Nevada Las Vegas. While I was considering UNLV, I heard a radio commercial for a local helicopter flight school. Long story short, with the unwavering support of my husband Mike, that began the passion that moves me to this day.

What are some of your favorite memories from your time at Prairie? Did you participate in any extracurricular activities or clubs? How did they impact your experience? What staff member or class had the biggest impact on you and why?

While in high school, I had heard that one of my fellow classmates, whom I respected, had acquired his private airplane certificate at 16. I was impressed but, although I grew up a few miles from an airport, a career in aviation never crossed my mind as an option. Growing up at Prairie provided a stable, well-rounded education.

I started high school having mostly sports related extracurriculars then migrated to the Arts. I participated in school plays and musicals. I was chosen to play the fiddler in the school's production of Fiddler on the Roof...not because I could play the fiddle but because I could fit into the costume. I never spoke a word or sang a note. Choir director, Russ Price, would never tell me I couldn't sing, but we knew the truth. Theatre Arts teacher, Terry Dyrland, encouraged my short but intense interest in pantomime, which I performed during a school talent show and talent portion of a teen beauty contest.

Section 4: ADVICE FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATIONS

What advice would you offer to today's high school graduates as they embark on their own paths beyond high school?

As I graduated high school, I was CONVINCED that I would be a hair stylist/theatre make-up artist. My best advice to graduating students is that graduation may feel like an ending but it's one beginning of many beginnings. You will live many lives and be many different versions of yourself. Choose to be excellent... Try the thing!