

# LEARN BY HEART

## Spotlight on Keri Haskins

The past few years have been difficult for the mental health of many, but none more so than students who have had to bounce back from school shutdowns, virtual learning, and back to in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keri Haskins, Counselor at Bridgman High School, knows that students are in need of emotional support now more than ever.

"I have supported them in their mental health because the past few years have been tough for students across the country and even here at Bridgman," Haskins said.

Haskins saw the need for mental health services increasing at the Bridgman High School over the past few years and, with a cross-functional group, began to advocate for the addition of a social worker to the Bridgman staff. Through the support of administration and the Bridgman School Board, a social worker position was added in the fall of 2021 and students were able to receive more mental health services than ever before.

"We collected data on how our social/emotional needs at Bridgman Public Schools have been increasing and how we can always meet all of those needs. As counselors, we don't do therapy. We do check-ins, we do referrals, but we really needed a social worker to support those kids who were struggling with their mental health," Haskins said. "They go from being younger people to adults in just four years. We have to help them get ready for that transition and get ready for their post-secondary education, whatever that looks like for them."

Amber Smith, Bridgman parent and Mental Health Consultant at Berrien RESA, says Haskins puts students first and is always available to students and parents.



**KERI HASKINS,  
BHS COUNSELOR**

"As a parent and also as a fellow member of the educational community, I see how Keri advocates for her students, and tries to do everything she can to equip them with resources and help them to succeed. She works tirelessly and deserves every word of appreciation she receives. She has also advocated for mental health resources for students. Keri does not give up when there are barriers, but continues to fight for helping students, and that extra effort pays off," Smith said.

Now that the school district has a full time social worker on board, Haskins is able to focus more attention on helping students plan for their futures. What does she find most rewarding?

"I like to help first generation college students or where their family does not have a history of doing post secondary education," Haskins said. "Helping them realize they can get there. Helping them fill out their FAFSA applications. Helping them understand that money shouldn't be a barrier because there's so much federal aid out there to get to college. And for other students, it may be another path like an apprenticeship, or the military. I just want them to have some kind of post-secondary plan so they have the utmost earning potential and success later in life."

Thank you to Keri Haskins for helping our students Learn by Heart!