

MANDY KNUST

From Running to Engineering: Dedication Goes a Long Way

Graduate: Class of 2005 Occupation: Project Engineer By Kelli Knust, Spring 2010

Woman and engineer-two words that do not usually go together-describe my sister, Mandy Knust. After graduating from Forest Park in 2005, Mandy attended Purdue University and obtained a bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering, with a minor in chemistry. For the past eight months, Mandy has worked as a project engineer for Naval Surface Warfare Center in Crane, Indiana. Despite it being the home of Purdue's biggest rival, Mandy now resides in Bloomington, Indiana.

While attending Forest Park, Mandy took part in many sports and clubs. An amazing runner, Mandy found that some of her best memories of high school happened while participating in cross country and track. She considers setting school records in the 3200 meter run and 3200 meter relay-and also making it to state in this event-her greatest achievements. Her success in sports did not hinder her academic achievements; she graduated as a valedictorian of her class. She said, "Being organized and able to manage my time allowed me to get the grades I wanted without sacrificing the extra-curricular activities I wanted to do."

During her years at Purdue, Mandy continued her diligent effort and academic success. Involved in a running club, the Society of Women Engineers, a chemical engineering honor society, church groups and more, Mandy gained many valuable experiences. She earned an internship at Celanese-a global integrated producer of chemicals and advanced materials-in Texas for two summers. Mandy balanced her schoolwork and social experiences well and advises everyone to do the same. She said, "It is important to work hard, but you also need to take breaks and experience life. It is possible to reach all your academic goals while having a social life as long as you prioritize and make good decisions."

After graduating from Purdue, Mandy has taken an anything-but-ordinary job for someone of her age and gender. Her workday consists of many responsibilities that often change from day to day. Her general duties include writing proposals and test plans, performing tests on a variety of power sources for naval applications-specifically special warfare and alternative energy, and answering calls and e-mails from customers and other government groups. She also travels to conferences and visits vendors on topics related to her work.

To keep from becoming stressed, Mandy finds time for her passion-running. She has found that running helps her unwind and relieve stress after work; it also helps her meet new people. Mandy has made many friends through running clubs and training for half-marathons. She has completed several half-marathons and hopes to complete another one this year.

Similar to her experiences with running, Mandy has found that perseverance and dedication go a long way in life. Even through challenging classes such as electricity and optical physics, fluid transport, thermodynamics, and molecular engineering, Mandy never gave up; now she finds herself happy and successful. Keep an eye out for Mandy because she has an extraordinarily bright future ahead of her.