

**Alumni Profile for Darby Nelson
Nysmith Class of 2008**



Currently 2nd Lieutenant, United States Marine Corps

Tell us about your life since Nysmith.

I went to Westfield High School after graduating from Nysmith. During my first few years at Westfield, I began to want to attend a service academy and formed my high school experience to best help me achieve my goal. I took multiple advanced placement (AP) courses and started rowing as a new sport. Nysmith set me up for immense success in this goal because I was well ahead of my peers in nearly every field of study. During my senior year at Westfield I was taking college level math courses as well as leading the rowing team as captain. Rowing allowed me the opportunity to be recruited to the Naval Academy and my academic record, thanks to being set on the fast track early in life at Nysmith, allowed me the opportunity to attend the institution.

At the Naval Academy, I also had success both in the classroom and on the water. I rowed all four years and was selected as captain of the team my senior year. Academically, I earned my Bachelors of Science Degree in Operations Research, completed a yearlong independent study on how gender impacts performance evaluations within the Academy's system which is awaiting publishing, and graduated 69th in my class of over 1,000 officers. During my senior year at school, I was selected to become a Marine Corps officer upon graduating and receiving my commission. In June 2016, I began training at The Basic School, the Marine Corps entry level training for all officers in Quantico, Virginia. (Editor's Note: Just this week, Darby was assigned her Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), which is Ground Supply Officer. Her role will be to lead and train marines in coordinating the equipment and material for mission requirements including supervising the purchase and contracting of supplies, managing budgets and developing spending plans. Darby will soon begin her specialized training at Camp Lejeune!)

How did Nysmith impact your life?

Personally, I think that a lot of who I am has changed since going to Nysmith; however, most of the changes have formed me into the person I am today. I can easily, and often do say, that Nysmith was one of the most influential parts of my life. The school sets each child up for far-reaching future success in whatever fields they choose to partake in. All of my fellow graduates attended prestigious universities, but more importantly are now in the working field using that intelligence and dedication to learning to give back to society as a whole.

If I've learned anything in life, it's that problem solving is one of the most important factors in the education process, but one that is rarely taught. It's a skill I've used anywhere from taking my high school math tests to figuring out how to manage a rifle squad during field exercises. Nysmith was a formative part of my life because every subject drills in how to problem-solve within their specific disciplines, which allows learning to occur far past the memorization stage that many public schools utilize. I believe that problem-solving skills that are taught at Nysmith allows the students to become so successful within their careers long after they leave EDS drive.

Besides academic successes, I believe the character development that occurs at Nysmith stems from the dedicated teachers who care about their students long after they have left their classroom. Because my mother and stepfather taught at Nysmith while I was there, I had a lot of opportunities to develop personal and developmental relationships with my teachers before and after classes. Nysmith teachers are incredible role models, so these relationships had a huge impact on me personally. The teachers are constantly encouraging their student's to become the best versions of themselves they can be. In this type of environment, hard work, integrity, and discipline become ingrained in the students, which is consequently carried with them throughout their lives.

What advice would you give to current students and/or parents?

I'd simply say to make the most out of every opportunity you have. The teachers care about the students so much that the students need to take advantage of this and question how they can continue to get better. Education is not merely a check in the box but a constant element in life. If you take advantage of the opportunities Nysmith provides between the academic courses, friendships, and teacher mentors, you will continue to be set-up for success in life in whatever you choose to do.