



## Teacher Feature

**Michelle Hitzman** lives in her childhood home and has been teaching at Meadowbrook for 24 years, but those are just about the only places she's stayed for any length of time. Meet a woman with some serious wanderlust. "I love to travel, see new places, and explore," she said.

Miss Hitzman grew up as an only child in west suburban Brookfield. Her mother died before she was three years old, so she was raised by her father with a lot of help from her grandparents. She was always surrounded by extended family including 31 first cousins and many good friends that are still in her life. "Being an only child allows you to make close friendships," she said. She is now Auntie Shel to many of her friends' children.

By second grade, Miss Hitzman knew she wanted to be a teacher, but it wasn't an easy decision. "I struggled because I knew I could do anything I wanted to do." She attended St. Barbara, a small Catholic school, where she was a cheerleader and a girl scout. She went on to Lyons Township High School and then to Illinois State University where she earned a teaching degree. During college, she found a way to incorporate some travel into her education by student teaching in Eastbourne, a small resort town on England's southeast coast. She lived with a family there and taught religion. Of course, she toured the region during the school year, and when it was over, her grandparents flew to Europe to meet her, and together they explored their family heritage with visits to County Mayo, Ireland and Luca, Italy.

The travel bug kept Miss Hitzman on the move all through her twenties with trips to Australia and many parts of Europe. Highlights include scuba diving in the great barrier reef and truffle hunting in Tuscany. She has also made a point of traveling twice a year to her "happy place," her aunt's townhouse in Islamorada in the Florida Keys. "There's nothing like driving on Highway 1 in a convertible with the top down," she said. It's a drive she makes every summer with a group of high school friends. Miss Hitzman also travels with her fellow teachers. She joins Miss Mazzarella, Miss Verne and several former teachers and some from other schools on an annual summer trip to a lake house in Wisconsin.

All of her travels and time spent with family and friends have provided great material for her fifth grade students. She loves telling the kids stories and showing them how their personal experiences are the basis of writing their memoirs. "I teach them how to look back and learn a lesson and how it changes something."

### **Fun Facts about Miss Hitzman**

- Loves Jimmy Buffet, the Cubs, & the Blackhawks.
- Played softball in high school.
- Favorite subject: social studies.
- Headed to Branson, Mo over Spring Break to visit her dad and his wife.

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