

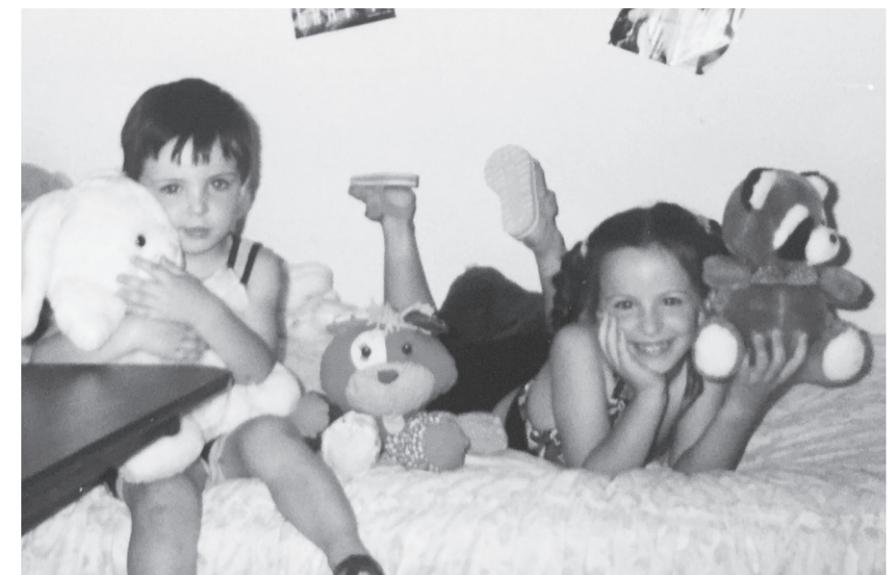
FEATURED



Previous page: CALLED TO TEACH: Graphic design teacher Dea Pool knew she wanted to become a teacher from a young age, and attended Georgia State and the University of Georgia to pursue her teaching career. Pool feels that her multiculturalism has helped her build relationships with her students. "I relate to my students from different places a lot better. I feel like I could be a good role model for them," Pool said. **Across top right: ROCKY ROAD:** Pool (right) and her brother, Dino (left), are sitting on the rocks. The two spent time together in the outdoors while in their childhood. "Gosh, I miss the mountains. North Georgia mountains are really beautiful and all but there is something about the villages of Bosnia," Pool said. **Bottom right: THE GENE POOL:** Pool and Dino sit in their shared bedroom. Pool feels the two were very close to each other growing up. "These are memories growing up that I will never forget," Dino said.



Photos courtesy Dea Pool



LIFE BEYOND BOSNIA

Graphic design teacher Dea Pool and her family escaped war-torn Bosnia in 1996 and found a new start in the United States.

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Before she arrived at Clarke Central this year, started a family with her husband and found a career in teaching, graphic design teacher Dea Pool and her family fled war-torn Bosnia when she was six years old.

"It's different growing up there," Pool said. "During my time, it felt a lot less safe. Before, my cousins would go out by themselves at age six to buy milk for their parents and walk back home, but when the war broke out, people were scared to let their kids go out to play."

Pool was born in Sarajevo in 1989 and, along with her parents, Djula and Senad Kunovac, grew up in Bosnia as the Yugoslavian Civil War broke out in 1991. Bosniak (Bosnian Muslims) and Croatian civilizations became targeted in what is now regarded as an act of genocide and "ethnic cleansing," by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), resulting in the deaths of an estimated 100,000 people by the year 1995 according to the USHMM.

The family soon made the decision to seek a safer place to live. "Leaving Bosnia meant leaving our families, good jobs, a nice house and secure futures," Djula said.

Senad first travelled to the United States in 1995 to find and establish a stable home for his wife and children.

"He got an apartment and thankfully my uncle was able to help us out financially. My dad was able to get himself established here, find a job and then we came (to the U.S.) shortly thereafter in 1996," Pool said.

Djula knew that coming to the America was an opportunity to survive and start a new life.

"Many people in Europe think of America as a promised land, the country with endless opportunities, especially for young, talented people," Djula said. "With Bosnia destroyed by war, America was a chance for normal life."

“I had a problem figuring out who I was. Am I a Bosnian American? Am I Bosnian? Am I American? I have been a citizen since I was 11 years old, but I never felt totally American.

--DEA POOL,
Graphic design teacher

After Senad set up a living situation, he went back to Bosnia while his wife and children moved to Lawrenceville, Georgia. Three years later, Senad returned, and the family began their new lives as Bosnian refugees in America.

“We were sponsored by some really nice people. We already had some family here, so that’s how we picked Lawrenceville,” Pool said.

Pool began her elementary schooling in Lawrenceville and was enrolled in her school’s English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. Pool says that the program helped her immensely, becoming a safe haven during her transition to a new language and culture.

“I’m not a very shy person, but in first grade I started school halfway through the school year as a Bosnian-speaking student and didn’t know a word of English,” Pool said. “That was the biggest hurdle I had as a child was interacting with my teacher and peers.”

Pool became a U.S. citizen at the age of 11 and in those early years of living in the United States, she struggled with her identity.

“I had a problem figuring out who I was. (I asked myself), ‘Am I a Bosnian American? Am I Bosnian? Am I American?’” Pool said. “I have been a citizen since I was 11 years old, but I never felt totally American. At home, it was very much the Bosnian culture but at school I felt like

I was just like everyone else. I had sort of a battle in my mind for the longest time, really I couldn’t pin myself down to one identity.”

As she grew older, however, Pool soon became acquainted with the American lifestyle and adopted the culture, and acknowledges that she came to realize her background made her unique.

“I think that’s the whole idea of America itself,” Pool said. “I think that’s what is beautiful about this country, is that everybody has so many different backgrounds.”

Djula enjoyed seeing her daughter embrace both American and Bosnian culture as she grew up.

“Dea has a new name for us: we are Bo-Mericans. It is easy for us to start a conversation in English, then finish in Bosnian,” Djula said. “I think she saved the best from both cultures.”

Pool feels her family and sense of heritage were reassuring during her transition to the United States.

“I have a very, very large family. We are loud and boisterous and just very embarrassing so we get together very often,” Pool said. “When we moved here I had aunts, uncles and cousins around me all the time growing up and parties all the time, roasting the lamb in the backyard, I mean huge events.”

Featured: FINDING PEACE: Pool has been teaching for five years and this is her first year teaching graphic design. Pool has always had a passion for art and wanted to pursue a career that combined her strengths. “I’ve always loved helping people so I thought ‘I can be a teacher and teach art,’ and that’s what I set out to do from the beginning when I graduated from high school,” Pool said.



Featured: CARRYING CULTURES: Dea Pool moved to the United States from Bosnia at the age of six and grew up in Lawrenceville, Georgia. Growing up, Pool knew she was somewhat different from her peers and noticed the cultural differences between Bosnia and the U.S. “I love that I have friends and even family who are totally one hundred percent born and raised in America, and I love that I have a different experience,” Pool said.



“Dea has a new name for us: we are Bo-Mericans.”

--DJULA KUNOVAC,
Mother

Pool maintains a close relationship with many family members, especially with her younger brother Dino, who always admired his sister for her personality.

“Dea was a hipster before anyone even knew what that word meant. Throughout high school, I don’t think she kept the same hairstyle for no longer than two months,” Dino said. “She embraced who she was and that’s something not many people do nowadays because they are so worried about fitting in.”

As a high school student in Lawrenceville, Pool met Brandon working at a gymnasium her senior year. Pool and her husband Brandon each come from distinctive backgrounds, but Brandon attests that their differences bring them closer.

“We complement each other so well. Whereas I am conservative, she is adventurous. I am a homebody, and she likes to travel,” Brandon said. “Just about every aspect of each of our personalities fits in well with one another. It leads to some interesting clashes, but we both come out stronger in the end.”

Pool’s mother, Djula played a huge role in her life and influenced her to ultimately pursue a career in teaching.

“Every time I have a problem at school, I call her, and I’ll complain about it, and she’s like, ‘You sound just like me, you know you are trying too hard, you’re making yourself so stressed out,’ and I’m a lot like my mom in that way,” Pool said.

Djula attests that the same level of eagerness to teach and inspire in

her is present in her daughter.

“I might have earned a couple of points for introducing her very early to art and books, but she is smart, talented, enthusiastic and very social, and I can see how much she enjoys the profession she chose,” Djula said.

Pool has been teaching for a total of five years and this is her first year teaching graphic design. Through teaching, Pool has sought out relating her own experiences to those of her multicultural students.

“I really started to embrace the fact I was from another place cause now if I tell my students that they will start to feel, ‘Oh, well maybe she does get it’ or I can also help them transition hopefully,” Pool said. “I can give them my own experiences growing up. I think that is one of the biggest reasons I embraced that double culture life.”

Pool’s sophomore student, Finnish foreign exchange student Mikael Morney, has benefited from Pool’s presence.

“She has made that specific class easier and because she is positive she makes my bad days better in a way,” Morney said.

Pool attributes her success as a teacher to her own high school teachers and feels that they were a major influence on many areas of her life.

“My teachers in high school were really great teachers. I think they kind of showed me the relationship between student and teacher was really special,” Pool said. “I thought everybody deserves a person like that in their lives and I wanted to strive to be that kind of person.”

As Pool gets her students prepared for life, she also elevates her own knowledge and understanding of the world around her.

“I think that it has opened me up to a lot worldviews because you meet so many types of people when you’re teaching and you never really know what your students are going through until you get to know them,” Pool said. “You just get this whole different perspective of the world through their eyes. I think I gained a lot teaching, it broadened my view of the world.”