Meet Mindi Kvaal Anderson '01, a harvester of wind and steward of the environment.

What is your current job title and role?
I am a project engineer for a wind company called enXco. Our small office of seven is based out of northeast Minneapolis. As the lone engineer on our staff, I get my hands on everything engineering related that we encounter. This includes wind energy production studies, environmental work, wind farm layouts, mapping and field work.

Why did you choose this career path?
I was a science and math kid, so I knew from a young age technology suited me. Also I was involved in an internship program at the U of M called the CO-OP program and held a two-year position at the State Energy Office working with the wind and solar energy programs. After graduating, I tried HVAC design but found it to be predictable and outdated, so, through some ties I had at the SEO, I called some local developers and got an interview and full-time position in wind.

Tell us about an amazing project you are working on?
The amazing project I am working on is the Fenton Wind Power Project near Worthington, Minn. This is the largest wind project in the state and the largest single one-time wind installation in the U.S. When the project is completed in September 2007, there will be 137 wind turbines with a total capacity of 205.5 MW. That’s about enough electricity to power 60,000 homes.

The size of the turbines is really amazing. Each blade is 120 feet long, the towers are 260 feet high, and the total structure reaches a height of almost 400 feet.

How did CSB/SJU prepare you for what you do today?
The small classes and competitive courses enhanced my accountability and level of responsibility. College was a great time in my life, but it was also very stressful. Sometimes my courses pushed me to the limit, which is exactly what the real world is like. CSB/SJU also facilitated the development of a number of lifelong friendships, an extensive network of social and professional ties, and a can-do attitude that makes me believe I can make a difference if I put my mind to it.

How did your coursework and degree unfold?
I earned a B.A. in applied physics in 2001. I started at Saint Ben’s with preengineering in mind and stuck with it. I was able to earn the B.A. and a B.S. in mechanical engineering from the U of M in five years. My advisor, Wilfred Theisen, genuinely cared about my experience at CSB/SJU, encouraged me in all aspects of my life and was a great friend. We still talk and get together on occasion.

What inspires you?
Being able to go outside and do something active keeps my spark alive. I also love music. Even though I can’t carry a tune or read a note, listening to music is a huge part of my life. I really believe music improves everything it touches.

Do you have a philosophy that motivates you and keeps you focused?
Well, I believe in not putting off things until tomorrow that you could do today. There aren’t too many days that I don’t wish I had a couple of more hours to get all my things done. I stay busy, and, because I am busy, I get a lot done. Those two things just go hand in hand.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
Hopefully doing something I love. Wind is a great industry with a great future, but I won’t be able to sit at this desk forever. I would like to use my physics degree from CSB and can see myself as a high school science teacher. I would love to know I am making a difference in a kid’s life.

What are words of advice you have for young women interested in non-traditional careers?
Non-traditional careers really don’t exist anymore. If you are interested in something, go for it. You won’t regret your decision. I have never felt like I don’t belong in my profession just because I am female. That attitude is fading
away, and in 10 more years I think it will be all but gone.

Anything else you want to share?
Yes, I met my husband, Benjamin Anderson, SJU class of 2000, my freshman year in Physics 191 with Clayton Gearhart. He transferred to the U the following year for engineering, and we lost touch. Then, about two years ago, we were set up on a blind date. It wasn’t so much a blind date, as we had first met seven years before in the Saint John’s Science Center, but we hit it off and were married in January of 2007.