



Selected as a NASET (National Association of Special Education Teachers) School of Excellence annually from 2014-2022.

# Maryville Jen School

Holiday Issue

January, 2023

## Principal's Address:

Happy New Year!

I cannot believe a new year is already upon us. Like a broken record, I ask every year, where has the time gone? Nevertheless, when I take a moment to reflect upon all that we have accomplished in this past year, no wonder time is flying by quickly.

This past year we had three students fully reintegrate back into their home schools, with two more working towards that goal. In addition, the students in the CTE transition room built and installed four wheelchair ramps for Des Plaines residents. More students were added to the ranks of honor roll recipients, and our students achieved a few "firsts" in CAAEL this year.

This past year, we also broke ground on a major building renovation project for a new location for Jen School. Our new building will house 12 academic classrooms, eight vocational trade classrooms, three chill spots, a gym, a stage, a cafeteria, a kitchen, circuit training, administrative and support staff offices, conference rooms, and an amazing garden and recreation space.

Currently, new drywall is being installed throughout the building, new mechanicals are being installed for gas and electricity, and plans are being finalized for the elevator installation. In addition, schematics are being finalized for wiring for security, classroom technology, and camera installation.

The construction company assures us that we are on schedule to move in August of 2023. That is just 206 days from the day I write this update. Those days are going to fly by quickly, and during this time, we will keep you posted on our students' progress and the progress of the new building; meanwhile, we will continue what we do best, helping students along their educational journey.

Happy New Year and Be Safe,

Ann M. Craig  
Director of Educational Services/Principal

## Social Media

Like Jen School on Facebook!



Follow @jenschool on Instagram!



Tweet @JenSchool2 on Twitter!



# New Year, New Gear!

By: Stavros Kouriabalis - Para/Job Coach

Happy new year and welcome back! We have some exciting news that happened this month at Jen School. We have reported previously on how the students in Jen school work with creating designs and printing them out using our 3D printers. Over the break we ordered a new 3D printer but the unique thing about this one is that the filament used is metal or carbon fiber. We also purchased two new computers, one laptop for our podcast studio that will be better equipped to handle the file sizes and editing needs, and one PC for our new 3D printer. We can now edit videos and create new



podcasts faster and easier than before. We can't wait to get the students trained on these new devices and create some amazing things.

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# January at Jen

By: Mark Trerotola - Teacher

January was named for the Roman god Janus, known as the protector of gates and doorways and who symbolizes beginnings and endings. Janus is depicted with two faces, one looking into the past, the other with the ability to see into the future. Now that we have entered our second semester, and a new calendar year, it is a good time for reflection as well as future planning and goal setting. This is a time when Jen School looks upon its past successes, as well as forward to those to come through the end of the school year, and beyond. While Jen School is very excited for its new home in Niles and all that the new building will have to offer its students, it cannot deny the extraordinary impact that the past 16 years has had on the hundreds of students who have come through their doors. Just this year, Jen School has had 3 students receive A Honor Roll and 10 students receive B Honor Roll over the first semester, many of them achieving this honor for the first time in their



"Don't be afraid of new beginnings.  
Don't shy away from new people, new energy, new surroundings.  
Embrace new chances at happiness."  
-Billy Chapata  
THE HEALTH SESSIONS

academic careers. As we look forward to the second half of this school year, we are excited to experience with our students their growth as both scholars and young, independent, adults. Looking ahead to the rest of 2023 and ushering in this new year, we are filled with anticipation and possibility with the influx of new students we are welcoming and our soon to be, new home. Jen School wishes all of its staff, students, their families, and supporters a very Happy New Year!

# CLASSROOM CORNER

## Teaching Martin Luther King, Jr.

By: Moissette McNeerney

**Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. -MLK 1963**



January is an important month to reflect on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In his 39 years, Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement confronted our nation about the inconsistency between the way we acted (segregation and racism) and our ideals. Racism continues today in American society, but the situation is much different than it was in 1953, before the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum. Dr. King reminded this nation that we must act in a manner that was more unswerving with the country's founding principles, i.e., "all men are created equal" and have the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." His insistence on nonviolence avoided what easily could have turned into a race war. Dr. King's legacy infused in us the concept of political protest, and his fight for economic justice for all people is a tool to challenge the status quo rather than adjust to it. His work shows that we must allow ourselves to be changed. And, when the world calls us to respond to oppression and repression, we must always concern ourselves with those least protected, least defended, and most vulnerable to the violence of the state.

This month is the ideal opportunity for classes to view the film *Selma* or *The Boy King* and read *The Letter From Birmingham Jail*. Coretta Scott King established The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in 1968. Physically located in Atlanta, the website is filled with suggestions for teaching and learning resources. Visit it at: <https://thekingcenter.org/>

**Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights.  
-MLK 1959**



# Health Beat-Part 1: Mental Wellness

By: Donna Hoffman - School Psychologist

We bring awareness to Mental Wellness in January. The World Health Organization defines mental wellness as a “state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 43.8 million, or 1 in 5 adults in the U.S., suffer from mental health issues annually. However, the effects of mental illness are spread throughout society and affect us all directly or indirectly.

Mental Wellness Month serves as a reminder to maintain or try to improve your mental health, despite the ups and downs in life. One example of this is honoring the connection between your body and mind. For example, many people make new year’s resolutions that include exercise, weight loss, and dieting. However, mental health and wellness are just as important as physical health and often interconnected.

One easy tip to improve mental health is to spend time with loved ones, whether family or friends. Studies show that social interaction that

includes face-to-face talking, and eye contact can improve mood and enhance the quality of your relationships. Limiting social media can help as well as making phone calls instead of just texting.



Another way to improve mental health is to show gratitude for the good

things in life. We tend to ignore the positive things while focusing on the negatives. Gratitude is a practice that can help you reverse this tendency.

Self-appreciation and self-care skills can improve your mental health. Make a list of your strengths and acknowledge your talents. Pay attention to your “self-talk” and reframe your inner dialogue to how you would talk to others. Some ways to take care of yourself are decreasing screen time, meditating, or planning outings with family and/or friends. Pick up a new hobby and/or join a club. Take better care of yourself by remembering to get a good night’s sleep, eat well, drink plenty of water, and incorporate exercise into your daily routine. Daily walks are an easy way to relieve stress and rejuvenate your mind (while hopefully soaking in sunlight and much needed Vitamin D!) as well as listening to music, writing in a journal, or indulging in a special treat.

Lastly, consider therapy if you can afford it and have time to commit to sessions. Contrary to popular belief, therapy is not just for the mentally ill or those suffering from mental health issues. Therapy teaches essential life skills that can help you become more emotionally intelligent, improve the quality of your work and relationships, and live a more relaxed, stress-free life.

# Health Beat-Part 2: National Birth Defects Awareness Month

By: Tanya Horton - Paraprofessional/Job Coach

“Being healthy is a success most forget to celebrate.”

January is National Birth Defects Awareness Month. Birth defects are structural changes present at birth that can affect almost any part of the body; the most common being the heart. With EVERY pregnancy, a woman starts out with a 3% chance of having a baby with a birth defect, REGARDLESS of underlying health conditions or lifestyle factors. Birth defects affect one in every 33 births which translates to 3% or 120,000 babies born in the United States each year. Birth defects are the leading cause of infant deaths, accounting for 20% of all infant deaths.

Each January the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) raises awareness among women and families on actions they can take to help have a healthy pregnancy and baby. This is a time to raise awareness about birth defects and highlight efforts to improve the health of people living with these conditions across their lifespan. Join the nationwide effort to raise awareness of birth defects and their impact on individuals, parents, and families.

***Our mission is to lead the fight for the health of all moms and babies.***

***~March of Dimes***

What can you do??

- Make a donation to the *March of Dimes* or *Conquering CHD (Conquering Congenital Heart Disease)*
- Talk to pregnant women about the importance of healthy choices.
- Create awareness on social media

# SPORTS PAGE

By: Dan Baffin - PE Teacher

The CAAEL volleyball season has come to an end, and it was certainly one to remember for Jen School. We finished the season 5-1 which led to a berth in the elite 8 playoffs. We played against an excellent Sullivan House team, we traded match wins back and forth in exciting close games that were separated by 2 points each. We were able to pull out the win in the third and final match to move onto the 35<sup>th</sup> annual final four tournament. The tournament was hosted by Oakton College and it was a great experience for our students to set foot on a college campus. We battled and hung in there against Summit Learning Center, The Learning House, and Joseph Academy. I could not have been prouder of our group of student athletes as they never gave up on each other and left it all on the court. We ended the season in a tie for third place, but more importantly, we brought home the sportsmanship trophy! Congratulations to everyone that participated in the volleyball season. We are all so proud of you.



# Staff Spotlight: Welcome, Newcomers!

By: George Nikolaou - Social Worker

Ms. Maysaloon is one of the newest members on the Jen School team. She is currently a paraprofessional in one of the classrooms working with freshman and sophomore students. She decided to become a paraprofessional because she loves assisting kids with their social emotional and academic needs. Ms. Maysaloon incorporates self-awareness during class time with her students to help them grow and reach their goals. Outside of school, Ms. Maysaloon enjoys shopping and cooking. Three words others would use to describe her are kind, easy-going, and calm.

Ms. Kulig also recently joined the Jen School team. She is currently completing her Social Work internship and is in the final stages of completing her MSW. She decided to pursue an MSW because she wants to assist individuals who need help finding their voice. She plans on connecting her lessons to the real world, as crisis-intervention is a key part in advocating for students as well as helping them advocate for themselves. Outside of school, Ms. Kulig enjoys going to the gym, drawing, watching movies, and hanging out with friends. Three words that others would use to describe her are kind, hardworking, and creative.

## Getting to Know Ms. Maysaloon and Ms. Kulig

What is your favorite color?

Ms. M - Green and Brown

Ms. K - Blue

Have you ever had a nickname? What was it?

Ms. M - No

Ms. K - Didn't have one

If you were a superhero, what powers would you have?

Ms. M - The power to end wars and poverty in the world

Ms. K - Super strength

What is your favorite holiday?

Ms. M - Eid al Fitr (Festival of Sweets), which comes after Ramadan

Ms. K - Halloween

What was your favorite subject in school?

Ms. M - Language (English & Arabic)

Ms. K - History

What's your favorite movie and/or favorite book?

Ms. M - Favorite Movie: *Home Alone*; Favorite Book: *Les Miserables*

Ms. K - *The Nightmare Before Christmas*

What motivates you to work hard?

Ms. M - Success

Ms. K - Reaching my final goal of getting my MSW

What is something you've done that you are proud of?

Ms. M - Winning the best teacher award in my previous school

Ms. K - When I graduated with my undergraduate degree

