

2020 CEA Wisconsin Teacher of the Year Blurs the Lines between Education and Treatment

Jennifer Bautz joined the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC) Education Department in June 2017 becoming WRC's first music teacher. Although she had a Bachelor of Music and Education degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 38 post graduate credits and 22 years of teaching experience in the Lomira and West Allis-West Milwaukee School Districts, Jen was new to working with inmates.

Characterizing Jen's arrival at WRC, Corrections Program Supervisor Mary Vande Slunt commented, "As a true pioneer, Jen was faced with limited resources, little direction, and the unfamiliar rules and expectations of a secure treatment facility. Even with many hurdles over the past few years, Jen has worked hard to create a meaningful and solid music program for all offenders in our care."

In recognition of Jen's innovation, dedication and tireless work, the CEA-Wisconsin Executive Board is proud to name Jennifer Bautz as the 2020 Wisconsin Correctional Teacher of the Year.

Upon starting her work at WRC, Jen rapidly developed a comprehensive music program from the ground up. This includes 19 new adult music education classes and their curricula based on the interests of students and suggestions from other staff. The classes include: Piano, Guitar, Choir, Music Appreciation, Hip-Hop Studies, History of Rock 'N' Roll, Basics of Music, Jazz Studies, Musical Theater, Drum Circle, Music History, Composer a Day, Music Theory and Composition, Music Around the World, Holiday Traditions, Musical Styles, Tone Chimes, Unit Music, and Drama. On both the men's and women's units at WRC, the music continues to grow and blossom. There are constant waiting lists for many of Jen's classes.

WRC is a secure treatment facility operated by the Department of Health Services which treats offenders with significant and persistent mental health needs. Jen's music classes offer them much more than leisure activity. Among the health benefits that Jen achieves by involving inmates in music activities are improving visual and verbal skills, heart health, happiness, sleep quality, keeping an aging brain healthy, boosting immunity, and reducing depression and anxiety. Many of Jen's students have expressed that they have added patience, better moods, lower levels of anger, decreased levels of depression, a healthy way to release stress, gained comradery, better coping skills, socialization as well as increasing overall happiness.

Jen works closely with unit programs and treatment teams to meet the unique needs in multiple treatment areas by incorporating musical activities into everyday wellness plans. The addition of music classes at WRC was added in mindfulness training and added resources for trauma-informed care. Inmates working on recovery from substance use disorders have found a purpose, sense of belonging, and newfound goals to work towards. As inmates release into the community, many have found homes in church or community choirs, taking online lessons, and a healthy leisure activity as they navigate a sober lifestyle.

One inmate stated, "I took this class because I wanted to learn something that I believe my childhood was robbed of due to all of the foster families, group homes, and treatment centers." Jen believes, "Utilizing music as a creative outlet gives them back that lost opportunity of youth."

When asked to describe her educational philosophy, Jen responded:

I believe that all students are unique individuals that must have an enthusiastic and stimulating educational environment where they are free to grow mentally, emotionally, and socially. It is my desire to provide this type of atmosphere so my students can reach their full potential. A classroom should be a place where one feels safe, not only physically, but mentally as well in order to express themselves, embrace differences of others, and try new things. It is important to foster a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic. I acknowledge different learning styles and adapt to reach the visual, oral, and tactile learner. Teaching provides an opportunity to create lifelong learners, a process where one embraces new strategies, ideas, and philosophies throughout a lifetime.

In addition to teaching music classes and being involved in treatment programs, Jen acts as co-master of ceremonies at WRC's recognition ceremonies. She makes sure everything is in order; finds inspirational stories and quotes to share, introduces guest speakers; and organizes choir, drama, piano, guitar, and tone chime performances.

Jen has also added music to both inmate and staff holiday celebrations. This provides a great opportunity for her students to showcase their musical knowledge and talents . . . and adds joy during what can be a difficult time of the year for WRC residents.

Although Jen has been working at WRC for only a few years, she has already assumed a key role in providing staff training. Jen has informed new employees about the education classes available at WRC and the many benefits of correctional education. She became a skills coach in Dialectical Behavior Therapy as well as a facility-wide trainer for Limits and Listening. Jen contributes to WRC's Trauma

Informed Care Initiative and the Applying Wellness and Recovery Everyday (AWARE) personal health plans. Jen has also been a facilitator in the Training for Trainers staff development program.

One of Jen's colleagues described Jen as "a dynamic, authentic, and passionate individual who has a positive attitude no matter what. Her energy and enthusiasm for her work is beyond compare. She always has a smile on her face and a pleasant greeting for everyone she interacts with."

A fellow teacher shared, "Jen's music program is incredible. Her program blurs the lines between what is education, treatment, and therapy. Jen's program has given me a much deeper appreciation for the power that fine arts and music can have on mental health and socio-emotional regulation!"

Emily Propson, Education Director at WRC, shared: "WRC has a rich tradition for utilizing creative interventions to meet the needs of our clientele. Historically, we had teachers and recreation therapists provide musical opportunities for our residents, but never before a DPI certified music teacher. Jen entered our facility with high expectations and even bigger ambitions, and she has exceeded my every hope of what a music program could do within a facility like WRC. Our facility as a whole is noticeably richer for having Jen's passion, dedication, and creativity put into her classes, events, and performances."

"She is truly a visionary and has worked exceptionally hard to create a variety of meaningful opportunities for our offenders to listen to, learn, practice, and perform various forms of music while at WRC," says WRC Director Sue DeHaan. "Jen's work also demonstrates to the persons in our care how to utilize music as a coping skill and/or as a healthy leisure activity both while incarcerated and upon release."

One of Jen's favorite quotes comes from Bono. "Music can change the world because it can change people." That is why Jen is at the Wisconsin Resource Center. That is why Jen is a pioneer in Correctional Education.

The CEA-Wisconsin Executive Board is pleased to recognize Jennifer Bautz as the 2020 Wisconsin Correctional Teacher of the Year. She will receive a plaque attesting to her achievement and a \$250 stipend. Jen will be furnished expenses to represent Wisconsin at the Region 3 & 4 CEA Conference and Training Event on April 19-21, 2020, at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Minneapolis Airport in Bloomington, Minnesota. If she is selected as the Region 3 Teacher of the Year, Jen will be furnished expenses to attend the 75th Annual CEA International Conference and Training Event on August 23-26, 2020, at the Renaissance Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas.