

If the Shoe Fits... Wear It!



Jen McGillis
Smurthwaite ARLC



2005 Advisor Of The Year Nominee

As the old saying goes, “If the shoe fits...wear it!” This is something that Jen McGillis, Smurthwaite ARLC, takes to heart, both literally and figuratively. Jen is an exceptional woman who definitely “fits” Smurthwaite and has a passion for making this small community into the group of exquisite women that it is supposed to be. Anyone who knows Jen knows that she loves shoes! In fact, it is easy to see the many facets of Jen’s life by simply taking a peek into her shoe collection.

Jen’s life at K-State began in Fall 2004 when she joined the Smurthwaite community and became our Assistant Residence Life Coordinator. A native of Whitby, Ontario, Canada, Jen received her bachelor’s degree in kinesiology from Brock University in St. Catherine’s, Ontario. She is now seeking her master’s degree in kinesiology. When she moved into Smurthwaite, she entered several new environments for the first time. Not only was it her first time living in the unique environment of Smurthwaite, but it was also her first time living at K-State, in Kansas, and even in the United States. But not to fear! Jen wasn’t overwhelmed with coming to all these new places. In fact, she was excited and ready to take a step forward.

Role #1: Work, work, work: Jen as an ARLC

Dedicated is the word to describe Jen with respect to her job as an Assistant Residence Life Coordinator. While she lives with us at Smurthwaite, she has to



“walk the balance” between coordinating Smurthwaite and West Halls. Her work keeps her on a fast-paced go-go-go schedule. As grueling as the schedule can be at times, Jen is always energetic and ready to go on to the next task. Her **tennis shoes** are a great reminder of this because they help her get from task to task quickly.

Jen’s contributions to Smurthwaite are innumerable. The house is faced with a unique situation because it is not the same as the other residence halls; yet it is part of the residence hall system. It takes a special kind of woman who is able to understand the workings of the house while striving to make Smurthwaite better--Jen is that special woman. Mickaela Bonnewell,

former Smurthwaite President, said, “From day one, Jen has always been willing and ready to help. She provided countless amounts of encouragement and advice during my tenure as Smurthwaite President. Jen is *by far* one of the best advisors and ARLC’s that I have ever worked with.”

Jen has also taken the role of Smurthwaite ARLC to a whole new level. She doesn't consider herself our advisor; rather, she considers herself a fellow Smurthie...one of us. For example, even though she is not required to do so, Jen holds herself accountable to the same standards as the ladies in the house.

Members of Smurthwaite are required to compete certain amounts of community service, house fundraising, cultural events, and house programming. While she is not required to do these things, Jen completes each requirement along with the women because she feels like she should never hold us responsible for something that she doesn't do. She "walks in our shoes" and consequently, this has made a huge impression on the women of the house.



In addition, Jen was excited to actually be initiated and become an official member of Smurthwaite, showing her true pride in the house. This act alone proved to us how much she cares about the house and considers herself a fellow Smurthie, just like us. Monika Graber reached the "sole" of the matter when she said, "Jen has been a great influence on the girls in the house, and she truly has a heart for Smurthwaite and its women."



A passion and vision for the future of the house is not listed in the job description for the Smurthwaite ARLC, but Jen definitely possesses these qualities. One of the large goals of our house this year was to increase our recruiting efforts. Without Jen's extra work, this goal never would have become reality. Jen made phone call after phone call to receive approval for us to send tour invitations to women who are receiving K-State scholarships. Even though our increased recruiting efforts haven't gotten us the immediate results that we were hoping for, Jen never gives up and keeps pushing us to do our best.

Without Jen's hard work and perseverance, this house would not have been as awesome as it was this year, and many girls wouldn't be as excited as they are to be returning next year.

Role #2: Studying and serving: Jen as a student and community member

Amidst all this work, Jen still has to find time to be a student and a community member, as well. Since she spends so much time dedicated to her job and supporting the girls of the house, sometimes we completely forget that she has other shoes to fill, too.

Somehow, amidst all of her other daily responsibilities, Jen finds the time to study and attend class. Hitting the books can be hard to do when she feels like she has a million other tasks to accomplish, but Jen values education and never gives up.

Jen experiences classes from the other side of the podium as well. She is currently teaching a class for future Resident Assistants and Multicultural Assistants. Teaching a class often requires more preparation than taking a class, and this is just one more way in which Jen reaches out to many people. Lauren Jeffrey, a future Resident Assistant currently in Jen's class, says, "Jen is an excellent teacher in many ways because she always has fun activities for the class that get us all interacting and involved. She gives the classroom a wonderful learning atmosphere but also a fun one by telling jokes and making the class laugh. She's always there if we have any problems or concerns, and she's always encouraging us all to keep working hard."

In addition to work and school, Jen is an involved member of the community. Among other things, Jen has spent hours tutoring a girl who lives at Jardine. She spends what little free time she has devoted to intramural volleyball and softball teams and a city softball team.

Recently, Jen was recognized for her outstanding program presentation skills when she presented the program "Going Once, Going Twice, Sold!" about 'buying' personal values. At the Kansas Association of Resident Assistants Conference, she received third place for this program. She has also made Smurthwaite programming come to life. After being disappointed with the first house program she attended, Jen presented a program about how to do a program. Since then, Smurthwaite programs have risen to a whole new level.



In all these areas of her life, Jen is on a personal crusade to promote diversity, which reminds us of her favorite **Birkenstock sandals** that she wears almost every day. She has a passion for treating all people with respect and teaching others to do the same. Heather Williams says, "She has been a great ARLC this year because she's encouraged diversity and acceptance among members of Smurthwaite and the campus and community as a whole."

Role #3: Enthusiastic, spunky, and a listener: Jen as a people person

Exciting...fun...enthusiastic...spunky...classy...awesome...the list of words describing Jen's personality can go on and on forever. One of the main reasons that Jen has succeeded in so many areas and influenced the lives of so



many people is because of her contagious, bubbly personality. We'll always remember Jen's **white pointy-toed high-heeled boots** as a symbol of her fun personality. How could we ever forget the day she came bounding into the living room ecstatic to show us her new boots?! It is an extremely rare occasion to find Jen in a bad mood. Her love of life quickly spreads to those around her. Many people say they find it difficult to not have fun when they are around Jen. "She has been

amazing. She always says hi to me and gives me a big smile," commented Lauren Jeffery. "She's made me feel a lot more at home here at K-State and I love her to death!"

Jen is a "people person" in every sense. She spreads her joy to the people around her, but she also knows when it is the appropriate time to be serious. Laura Dudte, Smurthwaite Vice President, believes "she is incredibly gifted in working with people. Not only does she know how to have fun, but she also knows when someone needs to be confronted about an issue." That's the best of both worlds! We are fortunate to have Jen at Smurthwaite.

Jen always lets the women of Smurthwaite know that she is there for us and is willing to talk with us about anything--at any time. We understand that we can always drop by her office or apartment any time we have something to chat about, whether it's to discuss something heavy on our hearts or just to chat. Shelby Brenn commented, "Jen helped me through a really tough time. I knew that I could go to her and she definitely earned my love and respect."

Whatever the situation, Jen's personality will always be what makes her unique from any other advisor. No words can describe her amazing personality that can always cheer someone up when they've had a rough day or make someone smile just when they need it the most.

Jen's efforts in this house have not gone unnoticed. She serves us in so many capacities, just like her shoes help fulfill the many roles of her life. The following pages show how each Smurthwaite woman views Jen in a slightly different way. This is evidence as to how many ways she has impacted us. Jen will forever hold a special place in the hearts of every Smurthwaite woman.

Ask a Smurthie:

If Jen were a shoe, what kind
would she be?

"An athletic shoe because she is always on the run with helping people, doing activities, etc."

-Larissa Rice

"A flip-flop. She's fun and comfortable most of the time, but she can be professional if put together with the right 'outfit.'"

-Shelby Brenn

"She would be a ballet shoe: so graceful and prestigious in all that she does."

-Bjai Rice, Mail Clerk

"A BLACK CLOG--SHE'S A GO ANYWHERE, ANY SITUATION, ANYTIME KIND OF GAL. DRESSED UP OR DRESSED DOWN, SHE'S A FABULOUS ADDITION TO THE COLLECTION."

-BETH BUCHANAN, OUTREACH RECRUITMENT CHAIRWOMAN

"Winter white high heeled boots because they're fun and stylish."

-Laura Wallace, Recycling Chairwoman

"A cross trainer because she is so wonderful in so many areas."

-Leanne Gray, Administrative Recruitment Chairwoman

"NIKE --LIKE THE SLOGAN "JUST DO IT." SHE GETS THINGS DONE AND SHE IS A WONDERFUL LEADER."

-JESSICA GOEBEL

"She would be a running shoe. She's always busy and has an amazing amount of energy. Plus, she goes to the Rec a lot!"

-Laura Feldkamp, Treasurer

“A boot – it is classy; fun; casual; can be “worn” out (hung out with); good for dressing up (serious situations); demands attention and respect.”

-Becca Meyer

“She’d be platform high heels because I look up to her and I have her on a pedestal.
She rocks!!”
-Lauren Jeffery

“I would say she is a...tennis shoe! She’s extremely athletic...and cool, just like a tennis shoe.”
-Mickaela Bonnewell

“A colorful flip flop because she is fun, functional, and free-spirited.”

-Lindsay Cook, Historian

“I think of Jen as Nike Shocks because I like her bouncy personality. In a word: Boing.”
-Casey Wilkinson, Secretary

“Tennis shoes, because she makes me feel more comfortable with being part of Smurthwaite.”
-Hieu Doan

“A warm fuzzy slipper because she is always warm and inviting and makes you feel better.”
-Laura Dudte, Vice President

“Nickelodeon Moonwalk Shoes (they’re bouncy) because:
1. They’re from Nickelodeon, which promotes youth and fun (she’s young & fun).
2. They make you bounce. When Jen gets excited or is just talking she does a little bounce.”
-Kristi Lawrence, HICCUP Chair

“Pink tennis shoes. She is strong, dependable, can do anything, and fun!”
-Heather Williams, Judicial Board Chair

“Crocs, because they are very versatile – they can adapt to any situation, just like Jen. They are very necessary for showering or gardening – very different. Likewise, Jen is extremely important in our house for diverse reasons. They are comfy in all situations. Crocs make my feet sweat. This relates to Jen because sometimes she makes me sweat (not in a physical way). She makes me sweat because she pushes me above and beyond. They also come in every color imaginable – fun under the sun, like Jen.”

-Amanda Lindahl, Homecoming/House Relations Chairwoman B

“A FLIP FLOP, BECAUSE A FLIP FLOP IS COMFORTABLE AND JEN MAKES GIRLS FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING TO HER ABOUT EVERYTHING!”

-HOLLY CARMICHAEL, SECOND FLOOR PRESIDENT

“A Birkenstock sandal – She’s comfortable to be around, knows how to chill and relax, but is also capable of taking on rugged challenges or a classy environment. Jen is an all-around ARLC who can and does play any field well. ☺”

-Monika Graber, New Member Coordinator

“She would be a sneaker because she is very good at making others feel comfortable and because she is involved in many things; just like you can wear sneakers for many activities.”

-Beth Shirley, ARH Representative

“If Jen was a shoe, she’d be a super-cute shoe. However, she would also be a very knowledgeable shoe, like the new Adidas shoes that detect changes in the terrain. She’s also a very functional shoe, because she fills a variety of roles. And last but not least, Jen is a very comfortable shoe, one that can be worn at any time, because she is very easy to talk to and non-judgmental. In other words, Jen is the best shoe money can buy.”

-Sarah Corn, Scholarship Chairwoman

“Jen would be a satin house slipper with beaded trim. House slippers are comfortable and relaxing, but a pretty one is more fun. Satin and beads add a little bit of glitz, a special air about the shoe that makes it your favorite pair of house slippers.”

-Renee Strouts, Cultural Chairwoman

“A high-heeled tennis shoe because she is useful in every situation and because she is classy in everything she does.”

-Megan Hopkins, First Floor President

“A comfy set of farm boots because she is durable, hard-working, and is interested in seeing those she lives with succeed.”

-Becky Jennings, Service Learning Coordinator

A final note

Just as some of Jen's shoes have come and gone, some of her roles in life have come and gone, too. We are so excited that Jen will be with us again next year and that she is keeping this special pair of shoes (Smurthwaite) around for another year!



Jen is the “perfect fit” for Smurthwaite, and Smurthwaite is a “perfect fit” for Jen, just like all her shoes. We will always remember Jen for her love of shoes, as well as for her passion and drive to make this house an awesome place. Leanne Gray puts it best when she says, “Jen is one of the greatest things to happen to Smurthwaite in a long time. She truly cares about the house and wants to see us grow into something amazing both as a house and as individuals.”



Jen and the ladies of Smurthwaite

April 19, 2005

Dear Sir or Madam:

I endorse Jen McGillis as advisor of the year because of her passion for Smurthwaite Scholarship/Leadership House.

Jen has been excellent as our Assistant Residence Life Coordinator. She has met all of the typical requirements for the job such as: being a caring figure, being a mediator, being a leader, and being a friend. Jen deserves Advisor of the Year for her extra effort she has put forth, and especially for her vision for the future of our house.

As the Outreach Recruitment chair of Smurthwaite, I have personally worked with Jen on numerous recruitment events. Jen's wisdom and guidance has helped me devise new recruitment plans and fine-tune ideas. She has often gone out of her way to help me with recruitment mailings--even if it meant a trip to Pittman to make copies at 10 o'clock at night!

Jen and I have discussed many innovative methods to improve the recruitment process at Smurthwaite as well as the house in general. Her vision for our house is inspiring and optimistic. She is a true motivator.

In addition, Jen is an intelligent, honest, well-spoken, extremely hard-working, balanced, thoughtful, fun, and highly professional staff member of Kansas State University Housing and Dining Services. It is with great pleasure that I whole-heartedly endorse Jen McGillis as advisor of the year.

Sincerely,

Beth Buchanan
Outreach Recruitment Chair
Smurthwaite Scholarship/Leadership House

Laura Dudte
Smurthwaite Scholarship/Leadership House
1500 N. Manhattan
Manhattan, KS 66502
April 11, 2005

Dear Advisor of the Year Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to recommend Jennifer McGillis for Advisor of the Year. I met Jen, as she prefers to be called, nine months ago, soon after she took over the position of Assistant Residence Life Coordinator (ARLC) at Smurthwaite Scholarship/Leadership House. Since then I have both worked and lived with her as a Smurthwaite resident. Jen is fully qualified and deserving of this honor for several reasons.

Jen came to Smurthwaite last August and immediately began looking for ways to improve our house. Over the past several years, the house has been challenged to recruit new members and to “keep up” with the other residence halls. Jen recognized this. While establishing relationships with the members of the house she set into motion strategies and ideas to both help recruit new members but also to improve the quality of life for those members when they are living in the house.

After much debate among members as to the benefits and harms adding a residential assistant (RA) to our house, Jen suggested a compromise. The current president and I worked closely with her to implement a protocol for two members of the house to attend Resident Assistant/Multicultural Assistant (RAMA) Training. Throughout this process Jen guided us in making decisions regarding how this valuable resource could be utilized by our community of women and also how to go about presenting the compromise to the other women in an effective and productive manner.

In addition to working with Jen in this more professional manner, I have looked to her for guidance on a personal level as well. As to be expected when living in a house full of women, problems arise between roommates, housemates, and friends. During one particularly rough time in my own life, I went to her seeking comfort and direction. After compassionately listening to me, she did not just tell me how to handle the situation; instead, she deftly led me to finding my own solution.

I look forward to continuing to work with Jen next year as she continues her position as ARLC for Smurthwaite. I believe Smurthwaite will benefit for years to come from her passion for improving the house. Those girls who come to know her from living in the house will be inspired by her compassionate ability to push those around her to become better people as they move on to new chapters in their lives.

Sincerely,

Laura Dudte
Vice-President
Smurthwaite Scholarship/Leadership House