

March, 2019

207's Best: Elective Area of Achievement

Maine South is pleased to recognize Jennifer Beck as one of 207's Best in the area of Elective Area of Achievement.

When considering how to present the very best students that Maine South has to offer, Jen Beck is the first one that comes to mind. She is one of the greatest student leaders our school has ever and will ever have. She is a polyglot having studied French all the way to AP, and she studies Italian. Her academic resume includes AP French, AP European History, AP Language and Composition, AP Economics, AP US History, and AP Literature and Composition. During Jen's junior year, the tragedy in Parkland, Florida took place and she decided that we needed to do something. Jen presented an idea to the administration and brought other fellow students into a planning session to work on a memorial service for the students and teachers who died that day. Over 1,200 of her colleagues joined her in a memorial ceremony where poetry, reflections, and speeches were heard to honor those who lost their life in that terrible event. She is an editor for Southwords, the current Senior class president, a member of the Thespian society and drama club (where she was a stage manager and assistant technical director), and covered the referendum and provided feedback on the design process through her student lens. I selected her as our Maine South student for North Cook Illinois Principals Association Student Recognition Breakfast recipient and her other accolades include the Northern Illinois Scholastic Press Association Blue Ribbon for photography and for writing, a Hawk Pride student of the quarter, and has received honors in the World Language department as a polyglot.

Jen's French Teacher, Mrs. Anna Strozza, says, "Jen is an exceptional student in more ways than one, or two, or three. She puts learning above any grade, and she works very hard to do the best that she possibly can. Not only is she a phenomenal student in the classroom, but who she is as a person is truly unbelievable. The effort that she puts into making sure that students look beyond the four walls of this building is what really sets her apart. Last year, she organized the Parkland project to help the victims affected by the school shooting at Majory Stoneman Douglas high school. It opened up our students' eyes tremendously. She is the type of person who will become a true leader, in part, because she already is."

Mr. Alex Stathakis, her English 1 ACC teacher and Newspaper Advisor, says, "Jen's involvement in Southwords over the last three years has been nothing short of inspiring. I first saw her potential when she was a freshman in my English 1 Accelerated class; her ability to provide thought-provoking, intelligent reflections about texts while promoting dialogue among her peers was as impressive as I have seen in my years of teaching--and I knew that she would thrive as a journalist. In the years since, she has won scholastic journalism awards for both her photography and writing, and she is a guiding force on the newspaper's editorial board. Her maturity and critical eye push the other editors to think deeply about larger issues that impact the school and society as a whole. Jen's selfless approach to all that she does--including the Parkland Project she organized last year--is a hallmark of her character, and I count myself lucky to have had the opportunity to work with her for four years."

Jen's AP English Literature and Composition teacher, Mrs. Amy Krukowski, says, "Jen's passion and interest in a variety of subjects and issues is an inspiration. I love her strong voice (both literally and figuratively)! She is truly unique and a great role model for other Maine South students."

Mr. Greg Nordahl, Jen's Chemistry ACC teacher, says "As a student in chemistry, Jen was superb in every way. But, beyond that she is always positive, timely, responsible and prepared. She works wonderfully with others in the class and will always take the time to help another student out. Jen's integrity and character help to make Maine South a great place to go to school."

Jen's Counselor, Mrs. Erin Sanchez, says "Jen Beck is one of the most impressive students I have known in my 28 years as a teacher and counselor. She demonstrates an extraordinary level of poise, self-assurance, and sense of purpose. Jen has made an impact in so many areas of the school, but one standout example is her activism after the Parkland shooting in February 2018. Jen spearheaded the creation of a giant banner signed and decorated by many of her classmates and sent to the students in Parkland. Her idea, she said, was to get the school together to create something beautiful in the face of tragedy. She also met with school administrators to coordinate Maine South's Student Walkout on March 14, 2018. On that day, she spoke eloquently and forcefully to the crowd of students, calling for them to support each other and work toward a better future. In this situation and in so many other ways, Jen is an amazing student leader who will undoubtedly make a significant impact no matter where she goes or what she does after leaving Maine South. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with her!"

When the Parkland, Florida shooting happened, I received the following email from Jen, where she wrote, *"Anyway, if I have learned anything from being surrounded by younger kids in the community, whether that be from my experience as an older sibling, babysitting, or events like Teach the Peach, it is that our future is incredibly bright. Today's kids are in the midst of a cultural revolution where accepting EVERYONE is the norm. I am so lucky to be a part of such beautiful change and look forward to the day when I'm helping my children and eventually grandchildren write their APUSH essays about this very time in history! It is so easy to be caught up in the devastation and sadness that comes with cataclysms like this one in Florida. It is beautifully ironic how sometimes it takes such tragedy to bring humanity together, and that is exactly why I need your help."*

The comments above highlight how wonderful of a student Jen is and the amount of work she has taken on for others. She is interested in attending school at the University of Texas at Austin to study in the Moody College of Communication Honors Program as a Radio-TV-Film major with a minor in French and Italian. We will miss her and wish her all the best!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ben Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ben" being more prominent than the last name "Collins".

Dr. Ben Collins
Principal
Maine South High School