

Jennifer, administrative assistant for Physician Services in the Recruitment Office at Meadville Medical Center (MMC), is referred to as “Miss Jen” by a growing number of children in the community.

When Jennifer isn’t working, she and her husband, Jeremiah, are very involved in their church, Living Waters. They both participate in the Sidewalk Sunday School program that was established in 2014 by Rachael Groll, children’s ministry director. After hearing Pastor Ray Martinez speak about a program that was influential during his childhood days in Texas, church members decided that the Meadville area would benefit from a similar program to help children from disrupted homes.

During the summer months, volunteer teams travel to key areas in the community where many children are left unattended with no food to eat. Quite often children take food home from the church events to feed their hungry siblings. On one occasion children were seen sharing a dry box of pancake mix for their dinner. Their clothing is often in poor condition; if they are lucky, they may be fortunate enough to have a bed to sleep in. “I have seen some families at their worst possible moments, in the depths of mental health crises, substance dependency, CYS crises, homelessness or financial ruin,” Jennifer said. “I am not there to condemn nor judge; I am there to listen and to show them that someone cares what happens to them. It is also disheartening to learn that human trafficking has found its way into our area. People don’t want to believe that these things are happening right under our noses, but they are.”

Church is taken into the communities, but first and foremost the goal is to build relationships and create trust. When going into the neighborhoods, food is provided, fun games and activities are planned and a Bible story is shared. “We try to create fun activities that are educational as well,” Jennifer said, smiling. “Or perhaps there is a child that needs help with their homework. The volunteers are there to help any way they can.”



Volunteers help them find resources for their healthcare needs, housing assistance, tutors, food pantries and more. “By spending time with the children and eventually their families, teams are able to identify barriers that prevent these families from living happy, healthy lives,” Jennifer said.

One woman that Jennifer worked with for years was eventually able to move out of the area with her children. The woman later called to say she was safe. “I could hear her tearful voice as she said, ‘Thank you for always loving us more than you judged us,’” Jennifer recalled. “In those moments I realize I’ve been able to make a difference.”

“I have learned so much about the obstacles that our youth face today. It breaks my heart, but I am so fortunate to make a lasting impact on some of the children I meet,” Jennifer said. “It didn’t take much convincing for my husband to become involved in the program. After hearing my heartwarming stories during the first year, he decided that he too would like to help. It is so gratifying to see so many children taking advantage of Sidewalk Sunday School as well as other programs offered by Living Waters.”

Jen has worked for Meadville Medical Center for the past seven years and finds nothing more rewarding than working with local children.

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**We are proud to introduce,  
Jennifer Anthony, administrative  
assistant, Physician Services,  
as our November 2019  
Faces Behind Your MMC.**

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