

NEIGHBORS OF Murray City

FUELED BY PURPOSE, ROOTED IN MURRAY

SOFT-SPOKEN AND STEADY, JENN KIKEL-LYNN HAS BECOME
A DRIVING FORCE FOR CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY

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SOME PEOPLE BUILD HOMES; OTHERS BUILD COMMUNITIES. JENN, A FOURTH-GENERATION RESIDENT OF MURRAY, HAS DONE BOTH AND MORE. Her story, rooted deeply in the soil of her hometown, is one of perseverance, service, and the powerful impact of choosing gratitude even when life delivers hardship.

Jenn's ties to Murray are far more substantive than just a street address. Her great-grandparents, grandparents, and immediate family have all called this city home. Today, she lives on her family's original property—the same land where her parents once built their dream home. "It's surreal to be able to have that," she says with a warm smile.

In the heart of their formative years, Jenn and her brother faced unfathomable heartbreak. When she was just 11, her father died by suicide. A few years later, her mother was diagnosed with cancer. In the face of these life-altering experiences, they each found a way to move forward, the siblings encouraged by the strength instilled in their upbringing by two hardworking parents and now, more so, by their single mother. "She worked multiple jobs and did her best to balance being in both the Mom & Dad roles with two young kids," Jenn recalls. The value of hard work, entrepreneurship, and doing what needs to be done stuck with her.

Jenn went on to graduate from Murray High School, where she was known as a quiet and kind student, voted "Most Shy" in her class



yearbook. Despite her reserved demeanor, Jenn now lives life out loud, hoping to reach as many people as possible in the ways she knows best. Her family emphasized determination and flexibility over any pressures to pursue a formal education. Though Jenn doesn't hold a "traditional" college degree, her upbringing fostered a kind of hands-on intelligence and street smarts that have served her throughout life.

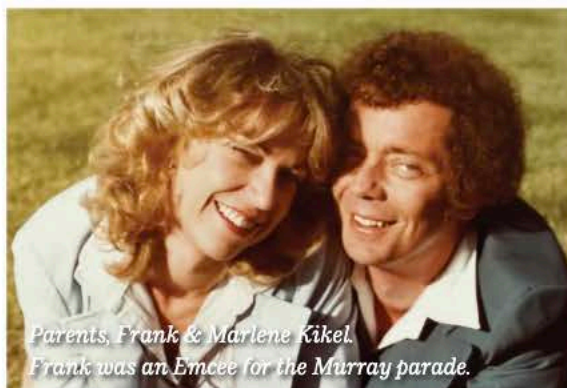
It also shaped the way she would face the difficulties still ahead. Jenn's mother went on to recover and remarry, but the cancer returned, and when Jenn was 30, her mother chose a medically assisted death by suicide; a decision she made when the transition to hospice was the next step in her treatment.

In her 30s, Jenn experienced another major life shift: a divorce. At the time, she had two preteen daughters and was working as a stay-at-home mom with only limited experience in real estate. "I don't have a college degree," she said candidly, "so trying to find a job after staying home was hard." Jenn entered the nonprofit world as a director of a nonprofit, where she found not only a career but a calling. "I was fortunate to get that role. I loved it," she said. Around the same time, she also began expanding her real estate career. The blend of helping people through both housing and community service became her life's work.

Inspired by the events of her life up to this point, she co-founded her first nonprofit with her brother—The FMK Foundation, named in memory of their parents, Frank and Marlene Kikel. The foundation focuses on suicide awareness and mental health education. "It's been a way for us to personally heal," she explains. "We were really young when our dad died, and we didn't talk about the loss as a family or have access to resources such as counseling. And when our mom died—also by



Great-grandparents, John & Pauline Vehar, at the family property where Jenn raised her fifth-generation Murrayites.



Parents, Frank & Marlene Kikel. Frank was an Emcee for the Murray parade.

suicide—we held that loss internally for a long time too."

Today, Jenn and her brother are open about their experiences. "We didn't want to hide behind all of the trauma anymore," she says. "We wanted people to know their story wasn't just how they died—it was how they lived, and who they were."

The nonprofit, while not flashy or event-heavy, focuses on being a resource for those impacted by suicide. It offers a collection



Grandparents, Frank & Elsie Kikel. Elsie worked at Safeway in Murray.

of mental health tools and modalities, including lesser-known treatments like ketamine therapy and psychedelics, all aimed at helping people find the right support. The goal isn't to push any one method, Jenn explains, but to make sure options are available and that nobody feels alone in their grief.

In her home life, Jenn is surrounded by love. She and her husband Jason, whom she met four years after her divorce, have built a blended family that includes six adult children and their partners. "There are twelve of them total," she laughs, "and they all pile on the couch with blankets when they come over. We're all super silly, but I love that they're all comfortable together. That's home."

Their family traditions center on togetherness: holiday dinners, cozy nights spent sitting around the kitchen island, and weekends spent at their cabins in Mount Pleasant. "We have two cabins, separated by a creek. It's an incredibly peaceful & magical place," Jenn says. "It's where I can quiet my mind." These family rituals echo the warmth Jenn experienced growing up. Her mother was known for opening their home to others, sometimes even creating impromptu Christmas mornings for friends who didn't have a place to go. Jenn spoke with admiration, expressing a sense of awe as she reflected on how her mom could so effortlessly provide for others in times of need. Jenn has carried that same spirit into her adult life. "We're the house where anyone is welcome," she says. It's no surprise that Jenn does the same for her family and the community when a need arises.

Her blended family is close-knit, full of laughter, and rooted in mutual support. "You wouldn't necessarily think they're a blended





family,” she says. “They all support each other. They all show up for each other.”

Though she was once known for her shyness, Jenn has become a force in the community. She is the founder and principal broker of K Real Estate, known as “The Give Back Brokerage.” The name is no accident. Her business philosophy is founded upon the idea that service and giving back are the most important tenets. “It’s not just about donating. It’s about being a voice for nonprofits that don’t have one.”

Her drive to contribute is what led her to spearhead the creation of the nonprofit, the Murray City Downtown District (MCDD). “I saw a need,” she says. “There weren’t any resources specifically only for Murray business owners like me, so I created what I was looking for and now provide to others in the community.” With the support of the mayor and city council, she established this program designed to uplift the heart of the city she loves.

Her many roles —real estate broker, nonprofit founder, mentor, and community advocate—are all interwoven. “I don’t look at any of my roles as jobs,” she says. “They’re passions. I truly love what I do.”

At the heart of Jenn’s story is her ability to hold grief and joy simultaneously. A wisdom and lesson learned, that two conflicting or opposing ideas can both be true. Turning 52 this year (the same age her mother was when she died) brought unexpected emotional triggers. “For the first time, I had to seek counseling,” Jenn shares. “And I’m glad I did. It reminded me that even people who are usually strong need support.”

After embracing her own vulnerabilities, Jenn found herself accepting the resources she aspired to shed light on for others. Facing the grief just recently from a friend lost to suicide, she again found comfort in talking about her experience.

Many people wonder how she manages to do it all. Jenn’s deep love for Murray and desire to make an impact are what drive her to take on the projects that mean the most to her. She has found healing in helping others. Whether it’s a first-time homebuyer, someone

navigating a divorce, or a grieving client, Jenn meets them with empathy and steadiness. “I want to be a safe, soft space for people. I think my clients feel that.”

Her outlook is one of deep gratitude. “I’m full of daily optimism and I bounce from cloud to cloud,” she says with a smile. “I really do live in my own bubble of happiness. And I know that comes from losing so much—you learn to love every day.”

Jenn’s daughters, now adults, are charting their own paths. One is working toward her real estate license and plans to join the brokerage. Jenn encourages them to grow at their own pace. “They don’t need to have life figured out in their 20s,” she says. “Most of the things I’ve done in my life, I started in my 40s.” That belief in lifelong growth is central to Jenn’s own philosophy. She is an insatiable learner. Each year, she sets a new stretch goal: completing a business accelerator, learning public speaking, and taking an MBA course. “That’s how I stay sharp,” she explains. “And that’s what I want my girls to see, that there’s always more to learn, and you don’t need to be afraid to try.”

She hopes to instill in her children the same sense of self-confidence and adaptability that she and her brother inherited from their parents. Growing up in a house where “sky’s the limit” was the motto, she absorbed the lesson that failure and success often come in the same package. “I saw my parents succeed, I saw them fail, and the only true failure was in not trying at all.”

Jenn’s story is not about tragedy. It’s about healing and growth. It’s about turning the pain of loss into fuel for purpose. It’s about building a life surrounded by community and compassion. Something she credits the great city of Murray for fostering for so many families.

“I think everyone has trauma,” she says. “It’s what you do with it that matters. For me, I just want to leave something good behind.” Proof that the strongest voices don’t have to shout, Jenn leads with empathy, action, and deep-rooted pride. For those navigating their own losses or wondering how to begin again, Jenn offers a sound example: “Keep showing up, keep learning, keep creating, and above all, keep giving back.”

Website: jennkikellynn.com