

Bellevue
Public
Schools



Alumni
Spotlight



Jennifer Smedley

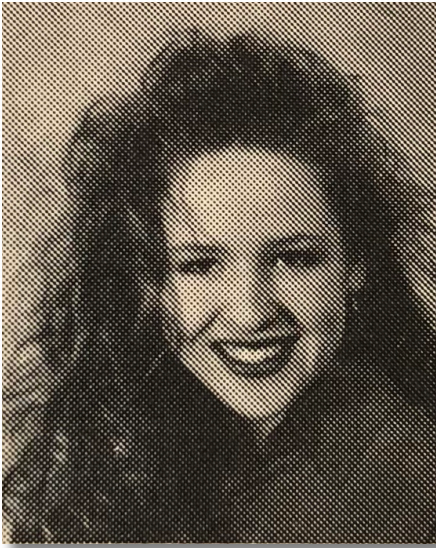
Bellevue East, 1994

Welcome to our Alumni Spotlight column where we shine a light on some of the amazing alumni that have graduated from Bellevue Public Schools!

Jennifer Smedley graduated from Bellevue East in 1994. Her life has taken many unexpected twists and turns but anyone who knows her will tell you that She Moms So Hard.

Jen, along with Kristin Hensley, make up the comedy duo #IMomSoHard. They are an Internet sensation creating videos that have millions and millions of views.

Although she is one of the hottest comedy sensations in the country - filming a pilot sitcom for a major broadcast network, touring the country to sold out shows everywhere, and co-authoring a book - Jen took some time answer a few of our questions.



Jennifer's class picture from her junior year at East

What schools did you attend in Bellevue?

I attended Wake Robin Elementary, Logan Fontenelle Jr. High and Bellevue East

Could you name one of your favorite teachers and share why they were your favorite?

I can't pick only one! In order of experience I adored Maureen Kowker for the 6th grade. She was challenging and strict and fair. She held us all to high standards and cared about us whole people, not just our education.

Kim Gangwish was my Forensics teacher and coach. I spent an incredible amount of time with her, and her family, traveling for speech. She was a mentor and guide in my life. I owe a lot of good things in my life to her faith in me.

What is a memory you could share from your time in school?

I used to host pep rallies with Mike Brewer. They were so crazy and fun! One time we wore roller skates and both of us wore dance team skirts. We didn't do a very good job, but I think everyone had fun. We did!

Another fun time was the bonfire for Homecoming. We had a big mud fight which I later found out was not entirely mud, since it was held at the rodeo grounds! So gross.

Did you have a favorite place to hang out?

I think everyone hung out at Taco Bell, right? (Back when it was a cheap place to eat.) I still have such fond memories of football games at East's field. Especially as it was getting cold. Having hot cocoa in the stands. I'm not sure I ever watched the game, but I'd socialize. It was so fun and exciting.





Did you have a favorite class?

Speech for sure.

As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A veterinarian, but I was NO good at biology. Now I just have a ton of dogs and write and act.

Did you have other family that graduated from BPS?

So many! My brother, Jeff. My mom Barbara Sink. My uncle Bob Sink (graduated the last year of Bellevue High). My cousin, Austin Sink.

Do you still have family in the area?

Yes, my mother is in Omaha

How did you first meet Kristin?

We met at a little tiny theater in Venice, California. We should have met in Nebraska and never did, but as soon as we met we were instant friends.

How did the idea of IMomSoHard come about?

We were friends, comedians, actors, writers and moms. We were feeling very “left out” of every part of life while we were moms. We felt like our careers were failing and that we were sub-par parents. So, really with no thought beyond, “Other moms might need to hear that they’re doing ok, and to laugh a little bit,” we started shooting the videos. We just felt that, while you are up late at night second guessing everything and feeling alone, there ought to be something out there that speaks right to the heart of moms, and ISN’T depressing or tutorial. Hopefully, that’s us.



Jennifer (Right) with Comedy Partner Kristin. Although both are from Nebraska, they met in California.

What were you doing for a living when you started making your #imomsohard videos?

Stay at home mom 90%, and freelance writer 10%. I was writing tweets for TV shows and ads.

At what point did you realize something amazing was happening?

It still shocks me, but when I hear from other actors and writers, sometimes even TV executives, that they or their wives are so grateful for what we're doing, I'm shocked. It tells me that we are hitting people in a more universal place than just entertainment, but where their lives are. I hope that doesn't sound self-important! As a comedian, you hope you make people laugh, but a higher goal is that you can make them feel something that can lead to actual happiness: letting something go, forgiving yourself, or just being able to laugh at life's hardships. We will get an email (and we don't get to see that many of them, but sometimes we get one forwarded) and it's a sincere thank you for helping someone's bad day or helping them laugh through a rough patch. That's everything. Oh, and my mom will ask me for an #imomsohard tee shirt or something and that feels pretty cool.

Performing live is very different than filming in front of a camera. How did the idea of doing live performances come about and were you ever nervous to be live in front of so many people?

The funny thing for me is that I have such terrible social anxiety, that being on stage in front of people doesn't register any higher than being at a dinner party. Nervous is pretty much my baseline. I get excited to be on stage, and my mantra has been the same for 20+ years of working in comedy clubs: These people paid their hard-earned money to be here, so work for it. We leave the stage exhausted and it's the best. We just want people to be happy to have been there.



A pretty good sign that you've "Made It" is appearing in ads on the side of a bus.





Tell us about the CBS pilot. How did that happen and when will it air?

We have a development deal with Warner Brothers Studios and they sold our pilot to CBS. That means we made a pilot that CBS thought would fit into their fall line-up, but unfortunately, they didn't pick it up. That's how it goes. However, WB has an incredible bunch of people who have supported and believed in our vision, so we are redeveloping with them for the upcoming year. Everyone cross your fingers that we find the perfect home for our TV version (which is really just a view into our worlds, sit-com style). We'll land in the right spot I'm sure. Maybe even CBS again, who knows!

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

PTO president, still writing, still touring, still desperately clinging to my youth.

If you could choose just one of your #imomsohard YouTube videos for BPS Alumni to watch, which episode would it be?

Ha!! Maybe the Spanx video. Then you get to know the whole me.



We saw someone mention a #ispecialneedsmomsohard. What are you working on now that you can tell us about?

We just finished writing a book for Harper Collins which will be out on Mother's Day 2019! I'm freaking out!! That feels crazy and unreal. We are also, as I mentioned, developing for television, and pitching feature films for women. We have so many ideas and so much less time.

As for the weekly videos, we really just try to talk about what's on our minds at the moment and what is making us laugh. We really would love to do a Special Needs video, we always want to be sure that we serve those topics in the right



way. Neither of us have special needs children, but have so much regard and respect for those parents. Whenever I think that my day was hard, I think about my friends who have medically fragile children or children with disabilities, and I realize my day is no comparison. But because we both have family members with developmental issues, we feel like it's very close to our hearts. My cousin, who graduated from East, was a special education student there and I would spend my study halls with his class. It was the best. I'd like to do a video on infertility and miscarriages, too, you know, hit ALL the fun stuff. We will. Give us time! It's important to us.

Which of your accomplishments in life are you most proud of?

My kids! They are kind and brave individuals.

What message would you like to give to current students in Bellevue Public Schools students?

You're in an amazing place to get your education. Take advantage of that, and then go see the world. Consider schools and studies outside of Nebraska, even if it's scary. You'll come back a new person. Surround yourself with positive people who work hard to achieve their goals and have big ideas. Water seeks its level. I suppose I should say "have fun!" or something, right?? Have fun, B-town kids!!

Links:

The Spanx Episode that Jennifer Recommended:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeJcMydi-rc>

Good Morning America Interview:

<https://youtu.be/v3NkAnn-tUA>

Internet Movie Database with a list of Jen's Work:

https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3614380/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1

#imomsohard YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4WkCbmrDECI9u4Ug-T6WBA>

The Official #IMomSoHard Website:

<http://www.imomsohard.com/>



Jen and Kristin Live
Onstage

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The Bellevue East Forensics Team during Jen's junior year. Jen is in the middle row, third from left and one of her favorite teachers, Kim Gangwish, is in the same row - all the way to the left.