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## Student Spotlight

February 2020

### Jenna and Michael English Miami, FL



A big believer in the importance of education, Karin Wilborn-English was grateful that her and her husband, Michael English, were able to afford to send their two children to the schools that would help them build a solid foundation for their futures. But when the family encountered financial trouble a few years ago, it impacted all areas of their lives and put the children's education in jeopardy. However, through unwavering determination, and with the help from the AAA Scholarship Foundation, Karin and Michael were able to keep their family on a steady path.

Jenna, the oldest of the English children, has been academically gifted from a young age. As an October baby, she was slated to start kindergarten later since she would not turn five years old until after the September cut-off date. However, while only in pre-K, Jenna was already outperforming her peers and able to read from a young age. As a result, the school and Jenna's parents agreed that she was ready to start kindergarten early. Over the years, Jenna continued to excel and the family was financially stable enough for her to attend a local private school that both engaged and challenged her. Her younger brother, Michael, soon joined her in school and excelled as well. By the time they reached middle school, both were doing very well academically and had found a love of sports – volleyball for Jenna and basketball for Michael.

However, the summer before Jenna was going to enter her freshman year of high school, the family hit a roadblock. For years, Karin's husband Michael had worked in a family business with his stepfather providing mechanical engineering services to hospitals. His stepfather ran the business side, while he enjoyed providing the service work to their clients. Unfortunately, his stepfather was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and had

to step down from the company, leaving him with the responsibility of trying to keep the business afloat on his own. The business dwindled down and the English family took a big financial loss. This put a strain on every aspect of their lives as their everyday expenses snowballed and debts piled up.

With no immediate relief in sight, they had to re-evaluate their expenses to see where they could cut down on bills in order to keep the family afloat. Through all of this, their primary goal was to keep the kids steady and on a straight path, which included their education. However, affording to keep both children at their private schools was becoming more and more like an impossible dream. Karin feared that with all that the family was going through, changing the children's school environment – especially during the influential middle and high school years – would put them at-risk for a downward spiral.

"I was scared," says Karin. "You know, sometimes when things become unstable at home, that is when trouble can start. With everything we were going through as a family, I did not want my children to get off on the wrong path."

Determined to explore every avenue possible to avoid disrupting her children's education, Karin visited Jenna's school to find out what options they had and even asked if she could work there to help pay for tuition. Through her efforts, she learned about the AAA Scholarship Foundation. She immediately applied and was overcome with emotion after learning that both Jenna and Michael would receive scholarships to attend their parent-selected schools.

That year, Jenna entered her ninth-grade year at St. Brendan High School in Miami. Not only did she continue to shine academically, she became the youngest student to make the varsity volleyball team at the school that year. Throughout high school she continued to maintain A's and B's, even taking on the challenge of college-level courses during her 10<sup>th</sup> grade year while maintaining her spot on the varsity volleyball team. Jenna was even able to join a travel volleyball team and would write essays to secure financial aid to assist with expenses. In the spring of 2019, Jenna proudly received her high school diploma and is currently enrolled at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami working on a degree in forensic science. In between her full load of classes, she also serves as a volleyball coach for a traveling team for middle school students.



Michael has also continued to excel in school over the past four years. He is now a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student at Columbus High School, an all-boys school in Miami that has provided him with not only a solid education but also a strong brotherhood of fellow students that support and motivate one another. For Michael, learning has always come easy and he continues to maintain A's and B's while also playing on Columbus' basketball team as well as a travel team.

Karin admits that the past few years have not been easy and that they are not out of the hole yet. The family continues to make sacrifices – such as sharing one car for the whole family, which can become chaotic with work, school and extracurricular activities. And, although in college, Jenna remains at home for now to avoid additional living expenses and to help her parents out in whatever

capacity she can. However, Karin knows that every sacrifice they have made to ensure their children had a steady school environment during their plight has been well worth it.

“I am so grateful to the AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors for giving my family a helping hand when we needed it the most,” says Karin. “With your support, we were able to keep our kids on a steady path when everything else in our life was so uncertain. You made it possible for them to be in a goal-driven and positive educational environment – the impact of which will last for years to come.”

### **About AAA Scholarship Foundation**

The AAA Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships solely to qualifying low-income, disabled and displaced students. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 82.2 percent of AAA scholarships are distributed to children at or below 200 percent of poverty. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and are concerned about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They wish to change their child’s learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. The AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only approved 501(c)(3) nonprofit scholarship organizations exclusively serving qualifying low-income, disabled and displaced students through these tax credit scholarship programs in multiple states. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information, or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit [www.AAAScholarships.org](http://www.AAAScholarships.org), or contact Kerri Vaughan at [kerri@aaascholarships.org](mailto:kerri@aaascholarships.org) or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.