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Tuesday, September 4, 2018
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LaGrange Resident Chosen IL Public Citizen of the Year

LaGrange, IL— Every day the nation’s 650,000 social workers act as advocates, champions, and leaders who make our society a better place to live. In continuation of this year’s National Professional Social Work Month theme, “Social Workers: Leaders. Advocates. Champions,” the National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Chapter (NASW-IL) is honoring the work of some exceptional Illinois social workers and individuals whose work promotes social justice and social change with and on behalf of the people and clients they serve.

One such exemplary Illinois citizen being honored this year is Statewide Public Citizen of the Year awardee Jennifer Enriquez. **Jennifer Enriquez** (*JD, George Mason University; AB, Georgetown University*) is an attorney by formal education and began a career transition by accident, working at her children’s preschool and then at a church. Jen began focusing on teaching children skills and giving them tools for finding peace in themselves and bringing peace and kindness to their world in 2017. She discovered a passion in herself and a yearning in her community. Peace Camp was born in Oak Park; La Grange was added in 2018. Jen teaches a “Little Peacemakers” class at a preschool.

In nominating Jennifer, bilingual teacher Aleasa Green wrote: “Jen leads many philanthropic efforts but in my opinion, none so fitting in our current political environment and with potential for impact as the Peace Camp in Oak Park and La Grange. Jen’s Peace Camp provides an outlet for much-needed social conversations promoting peace within ourselves and opportunities to understand commonality among various people and religious affiliations. Peace Camp participants meet and listen to guests of varied religions and cultures.... The guests show children how they create peace for themselves and the world through their individual traditions, relics, folkloric stories, and history.... In our area where schools are largely divided by income and often race, Jen works with local organizations of all incomes to build understanding between those of varied backgrounds, hardships, and aptitudes.”

Social Theatre Founder and school social worker Shawn Amador, LCSW, adds: “Jennifer Enriquez is making a big impact in our community, which is rippling out into the larger world. She recognizes the need of peaceful resolution and acceptance, and she has completely thrown herself into making it happen!”

The NASW-Illinois Chapter is proud of the work of Jennifer Enriquez and others like her who fight every day for the underserved and underprivileged in Illinois. Jennifer is one of four individuals being honored this year. To learn more about the other statewide awardees, please visit the NASW-Illinois Chapter website (www.naswil.org) or contact Joel L. Rubin, executive director, at jrubin.naswil@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with over 120,000 members. The NASW-Illinois Chapter is one of the association’s largest chapters with over 5,500 members in Illinois alone. NASW strives to advance social work careers, grow social work businesses, and protect the profession.