

# Manjimup days ignite

It's hard to believe that Jenn Parker has only been back with MAWA since mid-2016 so great has been her impact not only as a multi-event athlete but also because she is great fun to have around.

Jennifer was born in the south-west town of Manjimup and raised in nearby Pemberton on a farm producing cattle and potatoes. Holidays and weekends were spent getting dirty on the potato harvester, chasing cattle and trying out the nearby dirt tracks on a motorbike! I'm not biased of course but Manjimup and surrounding districts have produced quite a few MAWA stalwarts, such as Gary Ralston, Garry Hastie and yours truly. Another Garry, Jenny's husband of 27 years, is also from a Pemberton farming family. They have three adult children and three grandchildren; the fourth is due in January. Jenn is one young, vivacious and energetic Grandma.

Aside from her active farm life, young Jenny competed in Little Athletics from 10-12 years of age. *"It was only a small group but I loved it!"* Another favourite was sports day where she entered any track event up to 800m and all jumps events. Unfortunately, says Jenn, the restrictive scissor kick was the only high jump technique permitted at that time. Athletics coaching was brought to Manjimup by Derek Bannister and a teenage Jenn hurried to enrol and learn. She enjoyed competing in Perth at the State School's competitions in running, long and triple jump. She also made trips to Bunbury Amateur Athletics Club where the competition was matched only by the hospitality!

The shift work that came with her nursing career restricted time for athletics. Then marriage, family life and a number of moves- first to the wheatbelt town of Three Springs then back to the southwest's Busselton and Pemberton meant athletics was put on hold. However, in 2000 when Jenn was in her early thirties and back farming with Garry in Pemberton she decided to enter the Gold Coast Asia Pacific



compete at *"the lovely club"*, as she fondly describes Bunbury Athletics. She is forever grateful for all the throws tuition received there.

Jenn enjoyed her trip to the Games immensely, especially since Garry joined her in the throws comp. with limited training. This competition was a catalyst for Jenn and *"...really ignited my love for athletics."* She was delighted that at 31 years of age she could still execute the long jump, triple jump and turn out a *"reasonable"* 400m. Jenn says that she has learned to reset her goals to fit her current age and ability but still have the enjoyment of working towards those new goals and the thrill of achievement that all Masters strive for.

It was fortuitous that in 2001 Garry's work saw the family relocate to Bunbury. An excited Jenn could resume athletics -and hockey. However having their children swimming competitively at state and national level meant swimming, and rowing was the family focus. Ever the pragmatist Jenn also turned to rowing- and she also excelled – rowing in the State Masters Eight in 2014 and 2016.

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## In focus

With Carmel Meyer

Masters Games. In preparation, she built herself a long jump pit on the farm and bought a rubber practice discus. Jenn competed in the 2000 MAWA State Championships and made the two-hour trip each fortnight to



# Jenn's athletic passion



member Sheryl Woolley joined Jenn in refreshing their throwing skills. Jenn says that when they had enough courage to come along to MAWA events they were amazed at the ability, encouragement, and willingness of others to help them improve.

As the World's approached Jenn's Achilles was still troublesome but with her physiotherapist's help she was able to "...limp up the 100m track and hobble through the long jump and triple jump..." With enormous determination, she made it through to the finals of the discus, shot put and triple jump.

Jenn says, "After the Worlds I was hooked!" so naturally she set off for the 2017 Nationals in Darwin, coming away with an impressive list of wins:

T & F Pentathlon- silver, Discus throw – silver, Hammer throw – bronze, Weight throw – bronze, Long jump – bronze, shot put – fifth. A superb effort! "Darwin was so much fun on and off the field. I loved being Team WA, meeting fellow athletes and enjoying their journey as well."

Jenn thoroughly enjoys developing her athletic skills. She says this enjoyment has been increased by the "awesome" people who come along to the Master's events and the coaches who freely give of their time and expertise – Lyndsey Glass and Glenn Bartlett in throws and Tom Lenane for running. Jenn herself gained a Level 1 athletics coaching certification in order to help set up and

coach Little A's down south. Jenn is also full of praise for MAWA'S multi-talented throwers.

Whilst she is an all-rounder, the discus throw is Jenn's favourite. She hopes to put her broad range of skills to good use by participating in the Heptathlon at Strive in 2018 "just for fun." Her main focus for this season, however, is the 2018 Perth Nationals, where she will compete in Throws and Outdoor Pentathlon. To that end, she is working on her fitness, strength and technique, with a specific emphasis on lengthening her jumps. Strength and flexibility training are prioritised to deal with recurring Achilles and hip issues.

Whilst Jenn is very quiet as to her achievements, her performances did not escape the eye of the MAWA committee and Statistician and she received the Achievement Award for greatest improvement in Track and Field at the 2017 AGM. Jenn holds the W45 State records for Discus, Hammer, Weight Throw, Heavy Weight Throw, Outdoor Pentathlon, Throws Pentathlon and Weight Throw Pentathlon. And as she has always been one to give back, Jenn has been elected to the MAWA committee for 2017/18 as Track and Field Co-ordinator.

Having enjoyed international competition at Perth2016 Jenn hopes to broaden her experience in 2019 by participating in the World Indoor Championships to be held in Torun, Poland. Those four grandchildren will no doubt be cheering her on.

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The lure of athletics was always going to be too strong to ignore and the prospect of participating in a World Championship saw Jenn begin a three-month journey back to competition. The short prep time in the lead up and a return to events which are renowned for extra stresses on the body meant "...bang, my Achilles let me know this". With running difficult, Jenn turned most of her attention to the discus and shot put. Another ex-rower and MAWA