



MOMENTS WITH MARY JANTZ

Happy New Year!

AUTHOR

JANUARY 2026

A quick note
from me...



Happy New Year!
Thank you for joining
my newsletter! I hope
that you are all able to
enjoy a little peace, a
lot of family time, and
a ton of love this
holiday season!

 Mary Jantz x



2026



CAN YOU RELATE?

New Year's Resolution? Naaa by Mary Jantz

Looking back on this last year and thinking about that word “resolutions,” I’ve decided I don’t need any for 2026. Honestly, I don’t think anyone in our family needs to be better than we were this last year. Sure, with every year, heck, every WEEK, there come new goals to strive for, challenges to be faced, and levels to be conquered. But I’d say we gave the year our “all.” If anything, I’m ready for the universe to be better for US. No need to go into detail on the stresses or challenges 2025 brought. Everyone faces challenges. Shit happens. And as the “real” Coach Chavez from my chapter book, *Defending the Title*, would say, “You don’t lose, you learn.” Well, he’s totally right. I haven’t lost. None of us has. But man, we sure have learned some life lessons this year. And I’m ready for a positive aura to be cast over us. It’s time. There were, of course, lots of positive, amazing things that happened in 2025. All three of our boys continue to grow, literally and figuratively, on and off the field. They are growing into these amazing, caring young men right before our eyes. (continue on page 3)



TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Some teachers don’t just teach lessons—they shape lives. Our January Teacher of the Month is a third-grade teacher who does precisely that, and more. From the moment you step into Mrs. Henze’s classroom, you feel it: warmth, patience, and genuine love for her students. She creates a space where children feel safe to ask questions, make mistakes, and grow, not just academically, but as people. (continue on page 7)



COACH OF THE MONTH

Great coaches don't just teach the game—they teach life. Our January Coach of the Month is an incredible baseball coach with experience coaching club teams from 7U to 14U. Coach Louie Gonzalez, currently an 11U coach for an organization in Gilbert, Arizona called Mound Magic Baseball, understands that his role goes far beyond the field. Born in Tucson, Coach Louie then spent nearly all of his youth in Lake Havasu, making him a true Arizonan, or what he calls a "desert rat." Ironically, soccer was his first passion as a kid, and baseball was considered his "offseason" sport. But he soon learned the game of baseball from the inside out, playing various positions and gaining a deep respect for teamwork. "I considered myself an outfielder. I love running down balls in the gap! Although growing up in Lake Havasu, watersports were commonplace."

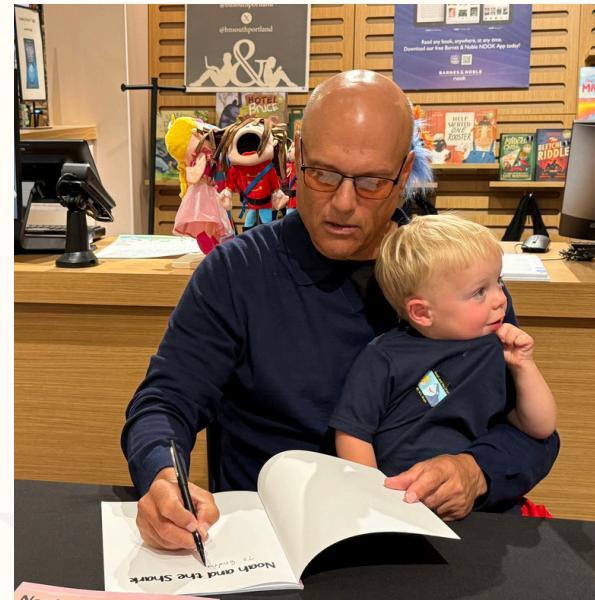
(continue on page 5)



DO YOU KNOW A COACH WHO DESERVES SOME RECOGNITION? NOMINATE HERE →



JANUARY KINDNESS AWARD



Kindness often shows up when life takes an unexpected turn. This month's Kindness Award goes to fellow author ML Bruin, whose journey into children's literature is rooted in resilience, generosity, and a lifelong love of stories. While he currently calls Southern Coastal Maine his home, which is just outside of Portland, ML Bruin (that is his pen name) was born and raised in a small town in Central Maine and has spent his entire life in the Northeast. His story is quite inspiring for all ages to hear, as he took a leap of faith, leaving his long-time job as an engineer to pursue a career in writing. After many years working

in the semiconductor industry, his life switched gears when chronic Lyme disease forced him into early retirement. However, everything happens for a reason because this decision pushed him toward a dream he'd been holding onto since childhood. "I wanted to become an author since I was in grade school," he shared. Even back then, he was writing and illustrating his own picture books, knowing that one day he'd return to storytelling. (continue on page 6)



"New Year's Resolution? Naaa" continued...

And there's no better feeling than knowing they are happy, finding their way in the world, and having fun along the way (but not too much fun). Our oldest graduated from high school and had an unforgettable senior year of baseball. It was very emotional (primarily for me). All the "lasts." The last home game, the last home run, the last at bat, etc. Change is so hard for me, especially when it comes to my kids. It's a reminder that they are moving on to the next phase. So, when it came time to move him across the country for college, it was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do. I knew I'd miss him so much, and the dynamic of our family of five would never quite be the same again. But so many positives have come to us in the last four months. Cam has shown so much growth. We have adapted to life without him at home, my relationship with him has gotten stronger, and we are all so excited to see what the future holds with his spot on the Tiffin University Baseball team in Tiffin, Ohio.



Another positive of the year? A huge milestone for me in my journey of practicing hot yoga. Ever since the summer of 2024 (so a year and a half now), I have gotten completely hooked. And a few days ago, I completed my 400th class. That's a lot of freakin yoga! It's paid off in more ways than I ever imagined, too. Physically, mentally, and spiritually. My focus is higher when I need it to be, and I attribute it to yoga. I'm thankful every day I found this outlet, and I don't take it for granted. I will continue to go as much as my body will allow.

Then there's my business. My small, little, tiny business. My world of being an author. I've probably spent more hours working on my business in 2025 than I have in total in the last four years doing this full-time. I wrote and published my 11th book in early February of 2025 and have been patiently waiting for a response from a literary agent interested in my 12th book (a chapter book I wrote back in 2024). Then, in late 2025, I wrote what will be my 13th book. It's ready to be published, but I am following a marketing plan that launches the book next month. (continue on page 4)



Cam, 18 at TU
this fall



Ethan Jantz, 16





College move-in day



Bo Jantz, 13



Author visit in Feb



Author visit in March

And that is just the writing part....no one really understands the behind-the-scenes work that goes into being an author these days. It's not just writing a story. It includes editing, formatting, and converting design files, navigating illustration platforms, blogging, researching, writing monthly newsletters, organizing, creating social media content, planning and performing author visits with libraries and schools, making marketing landing pages for book promos and announcements, creating teacher activities and lesson plans that coincide with each of my stories and making them available on multiple platforms, transcribing data, and pretty much wearing all the various hats necessary to make this work for myself. It's the reality of trying to make it as an author these days.

Does anyone see me doing this stuff? Not really. But obviously, I love writing and being an author, or I wouldn't be doing it. I love putting something out there that I believe makes a difference for kids: it's my small contribution to making the world a better place. Plus, it's flexible, and I'm so thankful for that. I can be present for my kids and family. I can work from anywhere.

And I never thought that I would be able to do things like turn a PDF file into an Epub (I mean, who even knows what Epub is unless you majored in graphic design or you're a professional illustrator, which I am neither). But I can do that now. I've turned my books into e-books and done things with writing and with this career that I never thought I could do. And I've leaped outside of my comfort zone, booking a flight and a hotel for a 3-day writing conference in Texas at the end of the month, traveling by myself, to collaborate with other authors and to learn better marketing strategies.

So, when I look ahead to this upcoming year, I don't need any resolutions. I don't need to be better. I don't need my family to be better. We all have goals and dreams of our own that matter, and that we will continue to strive for in 2026. What I need is for the *world* to be better. I need the universe to give us a little boost, just a little something-something. Just know we're trying our best. Watch over our boys and our family. I pray every day for answers for our kids and their health, for myself and my husband, and our health. And I pray for all of you as well. Happy New Year!

COACH OF THE MONTH CONTINUED...

Knee boarding was my go-to. Also, beach volleyball. Running on sand is exhausting and good training for the pitch." Today, he brings those lessons into his coaching, shaped by mentors who showed him the value of leadership, accountability, heart, but most of all failure. After all, baseball is truly a game of failure, and how to adapt to it: "Most of my mentors are found in books on my shelf. I read a lot of non-fiction, biographies, and philosophy. I sprinkle in some fiction. Difficult situations: real-life issues, life-or-death decisions. However, the human responses that these people feel are the same emotions players feel when stressed out on the ball field. The consequences are less tragic on the ball field than on the battlefield. The principle remains the same. My role is to infuse these lessons into our players – teach them how to control emotions and think through the situation." After a few years coaching at East Valley, Louie has been with Mound Magic (MMB) for 11 years, coaching at all levels of play. When asked what quality he tries to instill in every player, his answer said it all: "Discipline builds routine. Routine builds consistently. Consistency builds resilience. Resilience builds character. Character builds courage, trust, connection, awareness, and compassion." Whether a player is a star or just starting, he coaches with the same dedication and belief in their potential. He's developing confident athletes, yes – but more importantly, he's shaping respectful, resilient young people. Thank you, Coach Louie Gonzalez, for investing in these kids and showing them how to win, not just in baseball, but in life.



NOMINATE A TEACHER HERE →



DRAFT 2 DIGITAL

MARY IN MOTION

This last month, I have been so busy! I converted two of my highest-selling books into e-books on Amazon and also joined something called Draft2Digital. It is a platform for authors (similar to Amazon, but with way, WAY more distribution options). My books are now available at a long list of book dealers and libraries across the country. I also created a universal Link to my books on Books2Read: <https://books2read.com/MaryJantzBooks>. My upcoming book, *Miss Wise and her Magical Classroom Supplies*, launches on February 1st. I had hardcover copies (just a few, since it's not published yet) made at Lulu Publishing. I also got all my props for this year's upcoming author visits. Plus, I plan to attend the Author Media's Writer's Conference in Austin, TX, at the end of the month!



Pencil & Paper!
BOOKS 2 READ

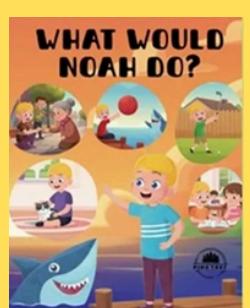
KINDNESS AWARD CONTINUED...

His first published book focused on life lessons and experiences while raising his children, something his wife encouraged him to share. Later, after watching competent, young professionals struggle to adjust to the workplace, he wrote a guide to help them “hit the ground running,” passing



along lessons he had learned over the decades. Over the last two years, however, his heart has been firmly rooted in *children's* literature. Inspired by the birth of his grandson, Noah, Bruin began writing a fully rhyming picture book series filled with positive messages and vibrant, full-page illustrations. *Noah and the Shark*, which recently received a national BookFest Award, teaches that “only the truth matters.” In the story, a young boy befriends a shark—but no one believes him until the truth finally comes to light. Bruin then wrote the next book of the series, *Noah's Summer Adventures*. Authors tend to find inspiration from all sorts of places. For Bruin, the inspiration is deeply personal. “When Noah was just a few months old, we purchased a little toy shark for him,” Bruin explained. “He kept it with him day and night for comfort, and one day it became obvious I needed to write a book about it.” His newest release, *What Would Noah Do?*, encourages children to do the right thing—even when it feels uncomfortable—by teaching through example. Looking ahead, Bruin hopes that one day his grandson will help dream up future stories together. When asked what his message was to his readers, his response, for me, summed up why I believe he deserves to be recognized not only in this newsletter but also by the world: “I hope to inspire, lift up, and even help all readers with whatever I write,” he shared. “For youngsters, I want them to be as passionate about books as I was—and never to view reading as a chore.” Kindness is choosing to create something meaningful for others, and ML Bruin does exactly that—one story, one reader, and one child at a time. For his kindness, resilience, and commitment to meaningful storytelling, it’s an honor for me to recognize ML Bruin as my January Kindness Award recipient. Click here to find his “Noah” book series along with his many adventures in writing:

MLBRUIN.COM



Know someone who deserves The Kindness Award? Click here to message me! [→](#)





TEACHER OF THE MONTH CONTINUED...



Born and raised in the small town of Douglas, Arizona, Claudia Henze is now in her 28th year in education, all of which has been spent in elementary education! She spent nine years at the K-2 level, then another nine years as a language arts instructional coach for K-8. This year will be her 10th year as a third-grade teacher, currently at Bridges Elementary in Gilbert, Arizona, and if you ask Claudia, she is still “loving every minute of teaching third grade!” She believes that learning thrives when students feel seen, valued, and supported, something she witnessed from her *own* childhood memories as a *student*: “Many teachers shaped who I am as a teacher today. Most notably, my fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Goertz, inspired my teaching style.” We all know teaching is not an easy job. It has its challenges. So, what keeps Mrs. Henze “showing up” on those hard days? “I am committed as a public-school educator. I value strong community ties. I appreciate all the sweet kids and supportive families I have worked with through my years. I do my job as a hobby and try not to sweat the challenges we face. It is my favorite when former students return to visit, or we run into one another, and they smile and say it was one of their most memorable school years.” Claudia’s strong commitment to her students starts at home, with her commitment to her family (immediate, extended, and friends who have become like family). When she is not encouraging and inspiring young minds in the *classroom*, Claudia is usually on the *ball field*, watching and supporting her two teenage sons as they do what they do best: play baseball. “My family brings me joy and purpose outside of the classroom. I thoroughly love watching my boys play baseball, and their passion for health and well-being. We have met so many families along the way, many of whom we consider family. Additionally, my extended family brings me joy. We are all very close, and I am grateful for their support.” Thank you, Claudia Henze, for being the kind of teacher every child deserves. This community is better because of you!

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PASS IT ON...

Enjoyed this newsletter? Forward it to a friend, coach, teacher, or parent who might love it too! Let’s grow this community of love, readers, helpers, and storytellers together!

Happy New Year

Mary Jantz x

