

Mary Smith  
Management Leader  
Youth Development

Street Address  
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Passion is life-altering. It drives great leaders to make a difference in the lives of others. Mary Smith is such a leader.

A youth development specialist, Mary has over 20 years experience in helping young people realize their full potential. From her early days as the owner of a martial arts studio, Mary connected with the children and teens enrolled in her classes. Hours after the last class, Mary could be found listening and counseling students about their problems. Living in a rural community, at-risk youth had few resources beyond private agencies. Mary knew she discovered her passion.

Mary went back to school and earned a degree in criminal justice. It was the start of a lifelong commitment to education and training, culminating with a master's degree in family studies and human services. Mary has always had one goal in mind – helping young people develop and acquire the tools for transitioning to a healthy adulthood.

Mary's work with residential agencies and various settings for psychosocial rehabilitation (PSR) and family services exhibits the passion and vision it takes to be a leader. Her creative approach engaged youths in healthy behavior and laid the groundwork for best practices adopted by many of the youth and family programs. Her *Tickets for Success* program awarded youths for positive acts, such as helping a peer, doing extra chores or changing a behavior. Her *Cleanest Room on Sunday* converted a hated chore into a badge of honor amongst teens.

Visual proof of Mary's influence manifested in a mural with handprints of school children who Mary encouraged to add a positive statement about themselves. A memorial wall shared the pictures of loved ones as children shared their loss and feelings. Mary's empathy and understanding of what motivates young people is one of her greatest strengths.

She shares her passion and expertise with home visitors and staff through interactive training that inspires and motivates colleagues to value the impact they have on the lives of young people. Ask Mary what her greatest reward is and she will tell you it is making a difference in a child's life. Her most cherished gifts are the notes of thanks, like this one from an eighth grader, "You cheer me up and you know what to do to help."

Mary lives in Salem, Arkansas where she takes pleasure in the beauty of her husband's family farm and sharing their life with their dogs and cat. Mary has a fourth-degree black belt in Taekwondo, enjoys reading, hiking, and family vacations. Mary views children as our future and she will continue to do all she can to help them fulfill their dreams.