

Amy Dewitt-Smith

A native Nevadan who grew up in the Minden-Gardnerville area, Amy joined the Nevada Lifespan Respite Care Coalition (NLRCC) board on October 1st, 2021, as it transitioned to an advisory body under Nevada Aging & Disability Services Division (ADSD). She had been involved with NLRCC previously.



She serves as the Executive Director for **Neighbor Network of Northern Nevada**, also known as N4 (neighbornv.org). N4 currently serves 12 counties in Northern Nevada. Although the work can sometimes be stressful, it is well worth it when she hears families exclaim how much they love N4 services. It's what motivates her and her team – to see firsthand the positive impacts of the support they provide – such as the free respite care services at home or out in the community.

Volunteering has always been an opportunity for Amy to learn from others – and what she has learned for various groups and communities helps make her better. Amy hopes that she'll never stop learning and growing. Working with the Respite Coalition is one way she tries to stay connected and push herself as she finds ways to leverage those connections.

You may not know Amy can sing in a “chipmunk voice” or that she's the mother of 7 kids (from 4 months to 19 years old). But family is important to her.

For one of their family traditions, they vote to “adopt” a culture to study during the holiday season - from Thanksgiving to New Year. The family learns about the holiday traditions, religion, language, music, art, dance, geography, politics and government, crafts, kids' activities, and especially the food! They find people to interview about different aspects of the culture or ask questions to groups through social media. This is something they have done for 17 years!

NLRCC is grateful for Amy's service-oriented, curious nature, and what breath of experience and knowledge she brings to our Coalition.



Maria “Ria” Lopez Fraley

Maria just recently joined the Coalition in December 2022. She serves as CEO of the **Special Needs CommUNITY of Northern Nevada** (sncnn.org) which formed as a nonprofit in 2021. This community group started as a play group for children with special needs and their siblings in Northern Nevada.

As a mom of 2 children on the spectrum, with a husband who is autistic, and experiencing her own neurodiverse journey, Maria is particularly sensitive to feeling welcome in society. She does not want any family to feel isolated or any child to be left out. She even shorted her name to “Ria” because it was easier for kids to say. She wants to bring Unity to Community.

Now she finds great fulfillment in setting up “adventures” – meet up events where everyone is accepted, loved, and supported. For her group, that comes through creating awareness about the sensory needs and accommodations for those on the autism spectrum that can make venues accessible and then scheduling meetups at the venue where these accommodations are made so that all disabilities and neurodiversity are comfortable and welcomed. These events happen on a monthly basis, with larger events around the holidays, to help families enjoy settings that others take for granted. The children (and parents) are also making lifetime friends and gaining a community support group of their own.

Maria volunteers her time to create wonderful networking opportunities where she can meet people, learn their stories, and help them find the information they seek. She likes to roll up her sleeves and make things happen! She joined the City of Sparks Council to be a voice for her neurodiverse friends, was instrumental in getting an inclusive playground built, and getting their commitment that future parks would be inclusive too.

What you might not know is that credit goes to her 12 years of waitressing for Maria’s connections to people in business, government, and leaders in the community. She is not afraid to talk to people and lean on her Rolodex of connections to raise awareness, funds, and opportunities for those she cares about. NLRCC is looking forward to joining forces with Maria on caregiver supports that will help her friends and family.