

Leading Learning Award

March 2024



Faith DeYoung

"Faith is an effective, responsible, professional team player who has been in our program for 30 years. Faith is our staff cheerleader and a huge support to our team in and out of school. Not only is she a great team mate to her teacher partner of ten years, but this year she is mentoring both of our new ISS staff, runs our twice a month ISS staff meeting, and is our chairperson for our Parent Events/Family Activities. She does whatever extra duties I ask of her from laminating to organizing to staying late for busses. She has three special needs children who have been through our program and two special needs grandchildren. She was born to work with kids with special needs and her experience raising her own children help her relate with our families. She is a gem and a valued member of our program! "



Debra Smith

"Deborah has been a tremendous asset to Empower U South as she has worked to assist in the transition of her old Pine Grove Classroom to our building. While she is only "temporarily" working with us at Empower U South, she has gone above and beyond to make sure the transition for the young adults she serves has been as smooth as possible. Throughout the whole process, I have heard absolutely nothing but positive ideas and suggestions from her to further ease the transition.

Further, this week we were glad to onboard a new ISS staff member that is now working in her classroom. Deborah immediately took them under her wing on the very first day and walked them through all of those "day to day" things we just cannot capture in a standard onboarding. Unfortunately, our new ISS member then had challenges with transportation. Deborah stepped up without hesitation, and offered to give rides to the new ISS staff member so that they can still get into work.

While we will only have Deborah at Empower U South for a short time, I am thankful for the time that we do have her! She clearly embodies the mission and vision of both Pine Grove and Empower U. "