



MARIA M. ARISTIZABAL

Maria grew up in Cali, Colombia, S.A., a city of millions of people. She moved to the USA in 1980 and knew very little about the culture in the USA and didn't speak English. She always has been thankful that she had her sister as a mentor and role model. She often wonders how different her life would have been without her sister. Maria's passion to help youth grew from her own experience and the help her sister gave her in her early days in the USA.

Maria moved to NC in 1998. Her first job in Forsyth County was with the WS/FC schools where she was able to witness the great influx of Hispanic people to this area. At the same time she also noticed how little Winston Salem citizens knew of the Hispanic Culture in general and, for that reason became very involved with the Hispanic League. In 1999 Maria was fortunate enough to meet a great lady, Dr. Joy McLaughlin, who brought to the attention of the Hispanic League the great need of college scholarships for Hispanic Students. The Hispanic League Scholarship program was officially launched in 1999. Maria chaired this Committee from 2001 to 2005 and is still an active member of the committee. This program has awarded over 150 scholarships and over \$260,000 to students for the continuation of their education.

Maria is currently the Executive Director of Child Care Services with the YMCA NWNC. This branch oversees all the before and after school programs for elementary school aged children in Forsyth County (17 total), and all the Day Summer Camps (5 locations). Maria has worked with the YMCA for over 8 years and her love for youth and commitment to help them achieve is evident with the work she does in her current job. She impacts the lives of over 2000 young children in our community and many young directors who work under her leadership.

Maria presently serves as the volunteer President of the Hispanic League, and is on the Board of Leadership Winston Salem, Youth in Transition Governing Board, Wake Forest Museum of Anthropology, as well as the past Board Chair and founding member of the ECHO Council. Past community involvement has been as a Board Members of Community Alliance for Education, Forsyth Adolescent Health Coalition Executive Committee, and founder Board Member of the Children's Museum of Winston Salem. Maria is a recipient of a 2005 ECHO Award. She is a 2006 Leadership Winston Salem graduate, and she is a proud bone marrow donor.