

Tribute page for Mary Piggott



This page is dedicated to Mary Piggott PhD who passed away on April 29, 2023. With this page, we honor her work and dedication to the field of positive behavior supports for over 40 years. Mary was passionate about integrating person centered positive supports in her work.

Mary was a founding member of the MNPBS network. She started in the field by working at Brainard State Hospital as a direct support professional. This is where her passion for positive behavior supports began. That passion experience lead to her interest in furthering her education at the University of Minnesota where she received her Bachelor's degree and master's degree and then the University of Oregon for her PhD working with her advisor, Rob Horner.

Mary was passionate about her work to make life better for people with disabilities. She worked at Vanderbilt University and also spent several years working in Arizona with American Indian tribes providing services to children on the reservations. She moved back to Minnesota and played a lead role in bringing the concepts of the Minnesota Intensive Therapeutic Homes to the state based on her time in Oregon.

Several of Mary's professors and supervisors were mentors and friends who contributed much to her knowledge about how to really help people with disabilities along with their families, and caregivers. Dr Richard Amado and Dr Travis Thompson were especially important to Mary.

Mary was a member of the Community Capacity and Positive Support Team within the Disability Services Division. Mary also served as the Jensen Internal Reviewer for a short time. She was was part of both the Internal Review Panel and External Program Review Committee. As a clinician on the team she connected with people and families, case managers, and providers as part of her work to expand the use

of person-centered, positive supports. She was an advocated for people’s rights. She was the best listener. She was caring, friendly and creative. She had such a broad reach and will be greatly missed.



Stories and Reflections from Others

The following reflections and pictures give you a sense of who Mary was as a person in the world. Please add your thoughts. Send your stories and reflections to: freem039@umn.edu.

Rick Amado, Arizona

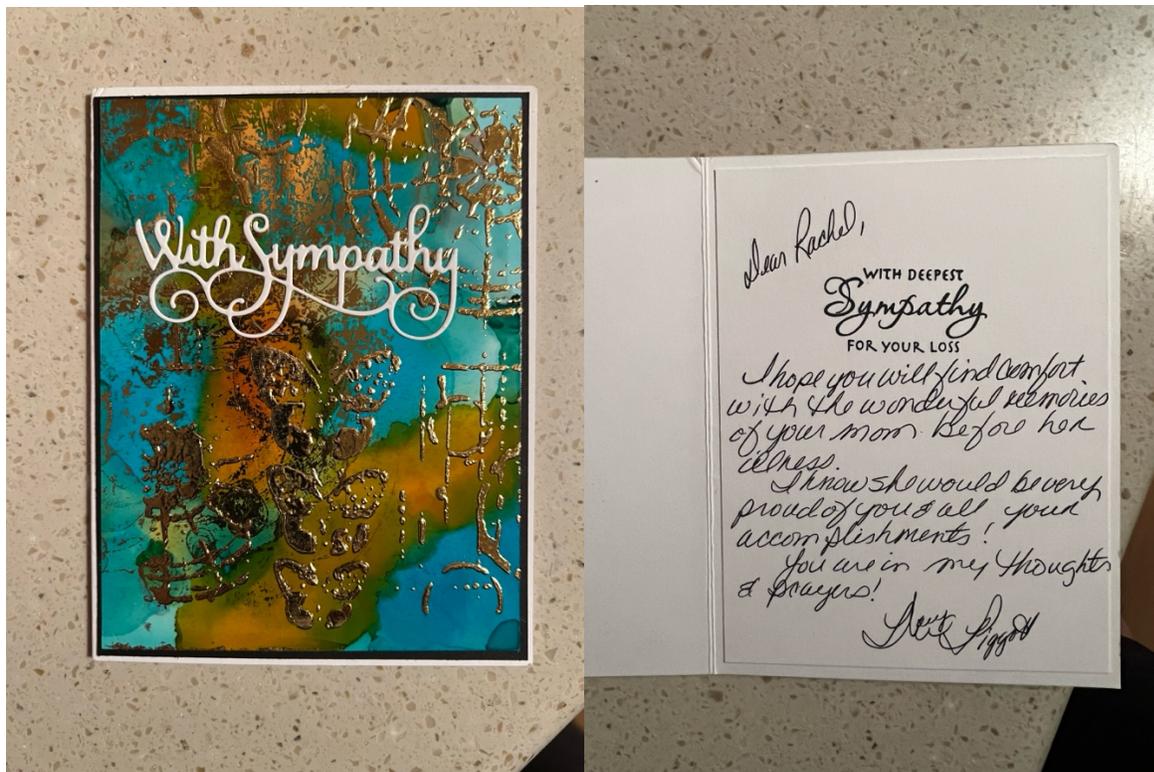
I’ve known Mary for a long time. When I was a program director at Brainerd State Hospital (BSH, later Brainerd Regional Center) she came to work in my program/building. I believe that happened in 1979. At the time we were reorganizing BSH to provide effective habilitation and supports to achieve JCAH Accreditation. Mary was looking for a job that would provide her with the opportunity to learn and develop. It was a fortunate confluence of events for all of us. It was a privilege to be one of Mary’s first behavior analysis mentors. She was curious, quick to learn, and even quicker to respect the power of the principles of behavior. It was gratifying to watch her progress from Brainerd to formal training at the University of Minnesota. While working on her degrees, she provided a foster home for children with intellectual/developmental disabilities whose behavior was also challenging at times. From the U of M she moved to Oregon to complete her PhD with Rob Horner. She had several roles/positions after Oregon, eventually working in Arizona to bring positive behavior supports to Native American families on reservations.

I was able to entice her back to Minnesota a few years later. She was stronger, more competent, and more confident than I remembered her. It was a gift to have her working with us. She not only had enormous capacity with positive behavior supports, she also brought compassion and curiosity to the table. She had a way of being with people that encouraged without offending and supported without disempowering. She had not just come full circle, she was now standing on the shoulders of all of us who had taught her along her way, often exceeding us. The unique person she had become is what allowed her to foster the new DHS psychotropic medications manual and contribute to both services and policy in many, many ways.

What I miss most about Mary is the phone calls we had in which we discussed what project she was tackling or what barrier she was confronting. It was illuminating to see the world through her eyes, or follow her thinking about how to address a particular situation. When Mary died abruptly we did not just lose a friend and colleague, we lost a force for being and doing better, individually and collectively.

Rachel Freeman, University of Minnesota

I met Mary Piggott when I moved to Eugene, Oregon to attend a doctoral program in positive behavior support. Before I was accepted, I had been sent to find Rick Amado by my mentor in Illinois. My mentor felt Rick would be able to give me advice that would help me find the next steps in my career. Rick Amado had told me about a doctoral program that his colleague, Mary Piggott had been accepted into and he suggested I apply to the University of Oregon as well. When I arrived at the University of Oregon, Mary was well already well established in the program and was one of the best PBS Facilitators I had met. She was the person I turned to for information and guidance. Once I graduated I moved to Minnesota where Mary was already living. In a way, our lives seem to be intertwined as we continued on our separate career paths. We kept living and working in the same states by happy accident or fate. I will miss Mary Piggott and always remember her kindnesses and her generous nature. Mary loved art and this was a connection we shared as well. Here is a photo that shows both her creativity and kindness. Mary sent me a handmade card and wrote a personal note when my mother passed away. She sent me this message only months before she passed away herself. I have received beautiful handmade messages over the years from Mary.



Handmade card and note from Mary Piggott. March 24, 2023.

Stacy Danov, Minnesota DHS

I met Mary when I came to work with Disability Services in 2014. Rick Amado told me about the Brilliant Mary Piggott and I would enjoy working with her. He was right! When I met her she was working with a group of clinicians to author the psychotropic medication manual in Minnesota. We instantly connected over this topic. Mary was so very kind and welcoming. She was someone I looked up to as she has so much passion for her work and was so smart. We became fast friends and colleagues. It was always a pleasure to work with her on projects. She was a thinker and analyzer. Always taking the extra second to think things through. She was passionate about supporting people with disabilities. The stories that Mary would tell about her work and her times as a foster parent brought tears of joy to my eyes. She had transformed the lives of so many children and families. She had a heart of gold. Mary was also a wonderful friend. She was the most caring person and friend I had ever met. She listened, she heard you and she responded with support. My most special memory of Mary was when she came to my home and had a pizza party with my family and my children. She loved my boys with all her heart. I will forever miss Mary. Each day I think of her and all of our wonderful memories. As my son tells me, just look up in the sky and say Hi to Mary. We love you and know your watching down on us.