

WENDY D. SAUNDERS

Wendy Saunders is Senior Manager of Leadership Development for YMCA of the USA, headquartered in Chicago, IL. Wendy began her career with the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles in 1996 and served as an executive director responsible for operating multiple Y branches before transitioning into a senior leadership development role with the national organization. During the latter portion of her tenure with the Los Angeles Y, Wendy managed a multi-million dollar operating budget, supervised hundreds of employees and volunteers, fundraised over \$800K annually, and co-led a merger of three YMCAs in both operations and volunteer governance. She now works with CEOs, COOs, executives and other senior leaders across the nation providing executive development institutes, leadership symposia, and other leadership development courses and programs.



Wendy is passionate about the Y's cause to strengthen the foundations of community in the areas of youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. She believes strongly that leaders in all sectors and roles in our communities have both a unique opportunity and a critical responsibility to positively influence quality of life for the people they serve. In 2012, Wendy participated in the inaugural Y-USA Leadership Symposium, and the white paper she produced, "Beyond Civility: Growing Compassionate Love in Communities" was published in YMCA of the USA's Journal of Community Strengthening™. Wendy also led the first national

Thought Leadership Webinar on the subject of her white paper in the summer of 2013. Y leaders and other professionals across the country have been inspired by Wendy's innovative thinking about the role of compassion and love in leadership, our Y cause, and in other settings.

As a complement to her work with the Y, Wendy is a Certified Teacher for Emory University's Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) program. The program was developed in 2005 to help participants progressively cultivate other-centered thoughts and behaviors while improving their own health, well-being, and feelings of connectedness with others. The promising results have attracted the attention of leaders in various sectors, including education, medicine, and business. To date, hundreds of business professionals, community leaders, educators, parents, college students, youth and teens have been trained in the cultivation of compassion. Major universities, such as Emory University, the University of Arizona, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have conducted research studies on this program and found that CBCT can reduce neuroendocrine, inflammatory, and behavioral responses to stress, and increase resilience, empathy, and compassion for others. Wendy introduced the CBCT program in California at a YMCA; it serves as yet another vehicle for strengthening communities.

In 2014, Wendy was recognized at the prestigious San Fernando Valley Business Journal Women in Business Awards as "Not-for-Profit Executive of the Year." In her award acceptance speech, she shared a powerful message with an audience of more than 500 people about the role of love and compassion in business, and the importance of workplace quality of life. Wendy is a member of the Greater Van Nuys Rotary Club, the Van Nuys Airport Citizens' Advisory Council, and the Jordan Farmar Foundation Board. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from the University of Maryland, College Park, and lives in Los Angeles, California.