**Amy D. McCracken**

**Spark the Heart’s Passionate People Project**

Thank you for wanting to participate in this heart-sparking project.

My readers love to hear about people who are doing what they love, how they are making a difference in their world, how they have paved a spiritual path for themselves.

You can use the following questions as a guideline to get you started or just answer them as your finished contribution. However you can best share your story with us.

And please include a shiny and radiant photo of yourself and several other images that will illustrate your story. all jpgs, no more than 1MB per file, please.

If you have any questions or concerns, please just ask!

Ruth

ruth@sparktheheart.com

***What is your life's passion and purpose?***

I am a helper. I have always wanted to be a teacher.

After earning a degree in secondary education, I ended up being a stay at home mom for years. When my son was older, I went back to work, and did so briefly at an alternative high school. Then I got my first job in non-profit. Whew.

**Finally knew where I wanted to be.**

I love helping people harness their energy, get focused, and make a positive difference in their lives—and the lives of others. I also like teaching through story. I think that’s my gift, and my purpose here. I incorporate those things into my work. I’m lucky enough to be the Executive Director of Richmond Animal League.

***How did you discover this?***

Being a mother brought this out in me. Positive feedback helps in discovering that I am doing what I was meant to do. **When people thank ME for work that THEY have done—and tell me that they appreciate the guidance, and cheering, and motivation, well, you can’t beat that!** I discover more and more every day about my passions, and my purpose.

***Where were you in your life before you found this passionate path?***

I think the path was always there. **It has taken a long time for me to realize that I have something of value to share with the world.** Once I started to appreciate what I can do—that I can tell stories, create interest in good causes, and help organizations and individuals tell their stories, and reach their goals—then I really started pounding the path.

My work at Richmond Animal League has enabled me to be a voice for the homeless animals that need us. **Telling stories for those with no voice is especially wonderful.**

***What was the impetus for doing what you do?***

I began working in non-profit after a short stint as a teacher in a school for violent offenders. It broke my heart to leave there, but leave I did, and I felt like I had to do some pretty good work to make up for the leaving.

Since then, I have worked in non-profit development. Every day, at Richmond Animal League, I am given more motivation to continue. We have more than 300 active volunteers who come in morning and night to help take care of our animals. Many days, they work circles around me. I have to AT LEAST do work as good as theirs.

Seeing animals leave our shelter, sometimes after long illnesses or stays, is always an impetus to do all I can for every other animal that is yet to come.

***What obstacles did you encounter as you shifted your heart’s desires into the work that sustains you?***

I don’t really feel like there is a divide between my heart’s desires and work that sustains me. I am so lucky to be able to write, build relationships with our supporters, pet fluffy kittens, and chat with old dogs—all in a day’s work.

***How did you manifest your passions into a life that supports you financially, spiritually and emotionally?***

I sit around and fantasize about what I would do if I didn’t have to work. Does everyone do that? I do. I come up with a list of things I am passionate about, but don’t do as often as I would like.

1) Write stories. 2) Go to the gym. 3) Cook good food. 4) Make new friends. 5) Sleep.

But you know what? I can, and do, do all of those things while I am supporting myself financially, spiritually, and emotionally.

**Working your passions into your work is key.**  Even if you think you don’t have a perfect job, you can make it better by using your real talents—those things you care about—to make you successful at work. **No matter where you work.**

***How do you maintain your excitement and enthusiasm for living from your heart?***

I’m not a perfect “live from the heart” person. I’m flawed. I lose my way. I get overwhelmed. I get discouraged. **But on what worthwhile journey doesn’t everyone ask, at some point, “What am I doing?”** Luckily, I get reminded a lot that I am on the right track. And then I get excited about it again.

***How do you measure your successes?***

I love a good pat on the back, but I feel best, and most successful, when I am happy with something that I have made possible.

***What inspirations can you offer people who are seeking to manifest their passions into a life lived on purpose?***

I know it sounds cheesy and clichéd, but we all really do have a little voice. Follow it. Don’t dismiss it as silly, or crazy, or wistful, or even stupid.

**No one knows better than you what is right for you.** It does not matter if your passion is something that may not sustain you financially. Do it anyway.

If my sister is reading this, I hope she goes out with her camera and takes pictures today. Seeing them makes me feel better—even though it is just a hobby for her. My brother is publishing beautiful, handcrafted books, but has to work on the side. These are purposeful things.

**Don’t get stuck on having to make a living doing what you love. You can make a *life* doing what you love—and that’ll do.**