

Marlena's Y Story

At the heart of the Marysville Family YMCA's Taekwondo program is Marlena, a force of welcoming energy. Named Program Volunteer of the Year in 2025, Marlena isn't just an organizer or coordinator; she's a bridge builder. She's shown up week after week to ensure the program runs smoothly and that everyone feels like they belong.

It all started with her kids. "First and foremost, I volunteer for anything and everything my two kids are involved in," she says. Her children have been in the program for over three years, and her husband recently joined. "It's become a family affair," she adds. "And beyond being involved with my family, it's extremely fulfilling to help a program that allows everyone to be part of something positive and healthy."

As a stay-at-home mom, Marlena speaks to the power of belonging. "Some days, the only socializing I get comes from my time at the Y," she reflects. "When you allow yourself to be a positive member within your community, you receive the same in return, a million times over." She now coordinates events, manages enrollment, supports belt testing, and serves as a vital connector between families and Y staff.

Volunteering for Marlena is more than about giving back; it's about showing up. "We've formed our own little community within our program," she says. "One parent even told me that without Taekwondo, she wouldn't have a safe place to go with her child."

Her impact hasn't gone unnoticed. Being honored at the YMCA of Snohomish County's Volunteer of the Year event was a meaningful moment. "I don't volunteer for recognition," she says. "But to be recognized, especially among so many amazing volunteers, was truly special."

To learn more about martial arts programs and volunteer opportunities at the Y, visit ymca-snoco.org.