

**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This is an archived edition when our program was called Leadership Landscape TV.

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**Kirt Jacobs:** Welcome to a new partnership between Metro T.V. and Y-PAL, the Young Professionals Association of Louisville called Leadership Landscape where we go inside the minds of local community leaders and allow them a chance to offer some keen insights into how they see themselves but most importantly explore just what makes them tick. I'm Kirt Jacobs a current Y-PAL board member and host of the show today. And today our guest is Barbara Sexton Smith Vice President of External Affairs for the Fund for the Arts. This is the oldest and most successful Art Fund in America.

In 1996 she was nominated by then Capitol Holding for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award for founding of Quick Think Inc., a leadership development company headquartered in Louisville with clients such as G.E., Humana, Brown Forman, AGON and YUM to name a few. In the spring of 2000 Barbara brought the community together by sending the West Louisville's Boys Choir to London, England and Paris, France to perform six concerts. This dedicated work earned her the 2003 community Angel Award from Today's Woman magazine. Appointed by the mayor, Barbara Sexton Smith serves on the Metro Air Pollution Control District board. She also has won national awards for her work with the Metro United Way. She directed the most successful fund raising event in the 49 year history of the National Conference for Community and Justice, the NCCJ.

There's more, Barbara has serviced 2002, 2003, 2004 co-chair of the community Hunger Walk sponsored by Kentuckiana Interfaith community. Barbara is a 2004 Leadership Louisville graduate, resides in Louisville with her husband Lacy T. Smith. Welcome to Leadership Landscape Barbara. Our first question is from this wonderful bio of

yours that's pretty eclectic. What drives you to do all of this?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Well I've given that a lot of thought over the years because a lot of people ask me that. I have a lot of energy and motivation for the things I do and it's pretty simple I'm driven by a personal mission that I've written for myself and that simply to leave the earth a little better than it was on the day I found it. And I get to do that just like you get to do it every morning when I wake up. So when you get that wake up call you say send me in coach. And away you go.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's great. Next question. Whom do you credit most influential in your life?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Well I would have to.. there's been a lot of people who have helped me and my life along the way. I've had some wonderful mentors and different jobs that have had but as I look back over the course of 49 years I'd have to say it's my parents. And first my father who taught me a work ethic that is just unshakable I got to watch my dad get up and go to work every morning at eight o'clock come home every evening for 40 years at American Air Filter. Never complained about his job. Was very thankful to have it. Never bragged about his job. Which I thought that was pretty instructive and my dad is a guy that had 21 patents in the air industry that we never knew that. So I thought you know you get up you have a job you go to work every day. You love it and you don't complain about it and you work really hard.

And then we have my mother whose childhood story has really influenced my life and that's a subject really for another show. But in a nutshell my mother, Izella, was born in Fight and Holler. It's a little coal mining camp in Eastern Kentucky. And her father died early in the coal mining camp and then her mother passed away and left them orphaned. So my mother was shipped to Louisville on a bus as a seven-year-old child to live the rest of her days in an orphanage and she loved that experience. She said the orphans were loved and taken care of and she's never complained a minute about that and so I learned a lot from both mom and dad.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's a great experience. To be cognizant of that. What was the most defining moment in your life Barbara?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** The moment of my life that got my attention more than anything else that's ever happened to me that I've ever done happened 25 years ago. Up here at the Wendy's at the corner of Bardstown Road and Grinstead Dr.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK. I've eaten there a few times.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Please continue to do so. Most people don't think of Wendy's as a place where your entire life would be defined and change forever. There I was out of college a couple years had my first management training job I was in the management training program at Wendy's in all my glory. On a Saturday night at midnight closing the store up had four teenagers working with me and then we were robbed and taken hostage for an extended period of time. And what a story that was and I can remember being there and being left for dead and thinking to myself I have to find a greater purpose in life. I have to believe in something other than myself because I can't save these four teenagers who were lying on the floor there with me and so at that point in my life I was a non-believer. And I just closed my eyes and I said if there's a power out there somewhere now's your chance. It's not about me it's about the four kids lying on the floor here who have a whole life ahead of them. So help me in this situation and out of that pool of blood came that safe and it opened and I was able to give the intruder the money they came to get and he turned one more time to hit me with a sawed off shotgun and take a shot and he shook his head and left. And recognize what that moment meant for all of us and from that day forward. I've given it all up and I know it's not about me and I will do whatever I'm asked to do that was the answer to your first question the wake up call. That's what I'm talking about.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Wow. I got goosebumps just hearing the story. So everyone got out OK

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Everyone got out all right. I was as I said left for dead so I was taken to the hospital. A couple of weeks later I was

able to walk and move and the very first thing I did. It was because I had been hit or beaten 22 times in the head and the back with the shotgun. And I was able to call Wendy's and say send me in coach I'm ready to go and I wanted to go back and work the late shift again my first shift on because you've got to face your demons. You can't be afraid of anything. And mom and dad taught me that and you get right back up if you go back in there and that's what I did and then my career just skyrocketed. I became the second highest ranking woman in Wendy's international.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Wow.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** In a very short period of time.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I'd say that is probably one of the defining moments of our program we have had so far.. So for this next question if there is one, what is your biggest professional regret? I mean if there was one thing you could put your hands around what you do differently if you have an instant like that?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** I do. And as you get to know me I struggle with the word like regrets and so forth and I see everything as an opportunity. However I regret that I have professionally is that I did not fall in love with reading sooner than I did. Because it was two years ago I decided you know I haven't read anything to speak of for years and years so I need to do that. So I got up on January first and I set my goals and I say Barbara you haven't read a book cover to cover in years you're going to read a book a month. Well that year occurred I read 16 books, 15 of them on leadership.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I can't say I've ever done that.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** I was so excited to be here with you today because I did read 16 books on leadership and one on the Holler in Eastern Kentucky in that particular year. But it was really fascinating because the first thing I did is that I picked up. Jim Collin's two runaway best sellers Built to Last and Good to Great. Because I know Humana is built to last and believe in that concept so I wanted to study that. Then I went and picked up Primal Leadership

that's by Daniel Goleman. Fascinating book every leader should read it. It's about the role of emotional intelligence in a leader. And then of course in honor of Yum Brands, how can you not read Customer Mania by Kim Blanchard and Learn: The David Novak Story. That is fascinating. And then in my opinion the best book on the market today is, Get It, Street Smart Negotiation at Work and that's a book that deals with the role of emotions in negotiations and if you think about what a leader's role is, is to understand the hopes and fears of the people whom they're trying to lead and that's what Get It can teach us all.

**Kirt Jacobs:** Wow. That's a good choice of books. You keep us busy through half the year I think what is your, on the flip side of that, what is your biggest professional triumph?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** My biggest triumph. I think I would have to say that 12 years ago I had the courage to leave corporate America with all of its comfort and security. That's a frightening thing to do with a young child, a ten-year-old at the time and a single mother. Mind you. And I had been working as I mentioned at Wendy's and then at the Fresherr Cooker and spend some time with Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Metro United Way but I decided I was going to do my own thing and so that's when I struck out and formed Quick Think Inc., the leadership development company that we have and as you already stated that led to the Capital Holdings nomination for Entrepreneur of the Year and also it led me into a speaking career with the National Speakers Association and I am one of only 17 women now that speak professionally in our country on the concept and the role of negotiation.

**Kirt Jacobs:** That's an interesting tidbit. I didn't know that from your bio. What is your favorite word? Do you have one?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Oh I do. Ok course with all those reading you can imagine. Reading expands your mind and your vocabulary. My favorite word embodies everything I think a leader's job is. And that is the word hope. Because if you take hope and you spin it out hope breeds in each of us the attitude of possibility. And if we have an attitude of possibility then your self-confidence increases and

that's the whole key. Because self-confidence I think is that thing that power within each one of us that gives us the will to achieve the greater purpose. So if a leader can grasp that and hold on to that and then he or she will see well then my job must be to instill hope in the hearts and minds of everybody that works with me or that is going to go somewhere with me. So then what I need to do I need to get in touch with your emotional center. What drives your hopes and fears and then if I could connect your hopes and with what the vision is of the organization I'm trying to lead I think I can get you to go with me. I'm convinced I can

**Kirt Jacobs:** Hope

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Hope

**Kirt Jacobs:** Hope

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Because remember the absence of hope is denialism. Now there's another word for you. You want to avoid that altogether. You got a group of people who suffer from no hope they're not going to be able to accomplish anything.

**Kirt Jacobs:** And in terms of leadership. In one word, you may have mentioned it in the great lexicon of English language would you say it's hope or would you have another word for leadership?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** I have a favorite word for leadership. It's very simple servanthood.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** That's what it is if you're going to be a leader the first thing we need to realize is it's not about you.. It's not about me. It's about the people whom I'm serving.

**Kirt Jacobs:** OK

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Now some people want to argue with me about that and say oh you're putting yourself in a one down po-

sition. Oh no. Once you give that up you're putting yourself in the position of having all power.

**Kirt Jacobs:** It raises all.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** That's right and I believe that it really starts with servanthood is where you have that feeling in your heart or a thought in your mind and those here are great things but unless you put feet to it and put action with your hands. You've done nothing with it. So we're in business to serve people. So as I try to teach people in leadership classes your job as a leader is to get in there, develop the vision, communicate the vision, understand your people, be decisive. Don't be afraid to make decisions and once you make them don't question them. Keep going but then race to the bottom of the hierarchy. You're not at the top of the pyramid, race to the bottom and then you cheer and mentor and serve and support the people who are following you. Servanthood

**Kirt Jacobs:** Last question. All right when the great day comes how do you want to be remembered Barbara?

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** OK. You can write it right there on my tombstone: Here lies a woman who left the earth a little better than she found it. I think that's where we started this conversation.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I think so. I think it's a great way to bookend the whole interview.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** Right.

**Kirt Jacobs:** We want to thank you for being on Y-PAL's Leadership Landscape. Thank you Barbara.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** OK.

**Kirt Jacobs:** I have enjoyed your insight. Thanks you very much.

**Barbara Sexton Smith:** All right you're welcome.



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**Kirt Jacobs:** Thank you for listening to MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs. This episode was archival audio from when we were known as Leadership Landscape TV. If you have any feedback, general comments, or a recommendation for a suitable guest feel free to email me at [kirt@moxietalk.com](mailto:kirt@moxietalk.com) or catch us on Facebook under MoxieTalk with Kirt Jacobs, or on Twitter under [@kirtjacobs](https://twitter.com/kirtjacobs) or our extensive website at [www.moxietalk.com](http://www.moxietalk.com)