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Susan Jobe ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to the G.U.I.D.E. for Life podcast, exploring topics related to the personal competency skills that empower Arkansas students and teachers to thrive at home, school, on the job and in the community.

Susan Jobe ([00:21](#)):

Welcome to the G.U.I.D.E. for Life podcast. This is Susan Jobe, and I have a very special guest with me today. Someone I'm very excited to introduce you to. Tammy Friend, who is the new G.U.I.D.E. for Life specialist here at DESE. Welcome Tammy.

Tammy Friend ([00:37](#)):

Hello. Thank you. Thank you for having me on. I'm looking forward to trying to fill your big shoes.

Susan Jobe ([00:44](#)):

Oh no, you're going to do amazing. And I know you probably get tired of hearing this, because I just think it's so cute, but you have the perfect name for the G.U.I.D.E. for Life specialist, Tammy Friend. I love it. I love it.

Susan Jobe ([00:56](#)):

Well, you know that I always start the podcast off just asking my guest to share with me a little bit about their journey into the field of education. And you and I visit a lot and we feel like we have very similar lived experiences, and we do have very similar backgrounds. So why don't you tell us a little bit about how you came into education?

Tammy Friend ([01:17](#)):

Okay. Well, as you know, like you, I did not start out in education. I did enjoy school myself as a student. I have fond memories of teachers that had a positive impact on my life during my teen years, particularly, my dad was a chemistry teacher. He would encourage me to be a teacher. He'd be, "It's a good job for having a family." Well, I wasn't thinking about having a family at that time. So like you also, I went into journalism and that's my undergrad degree. And really though, as far as related experience at that time, I had an internship at the communications department at Arkansas Children's Hospital, working on their newsletter. And then I would write part-time for a local newspaper in Bryant.

Tammy Friend ([02:02](#)):

After working at Children's and getting to cover the fun, the feature stories, the inspiring stories, I considered working with the youth. I had several friends that did encourage me, that were teachers and still are. And at that time, North Little Rock High School needed an English teacher, journalism, and a speech and drama teacher. Was speech and drama then, now it's theater. And the principal at that time said, "Well, you're as green as a gourd, but I'll give you a chance."

Tammy Friend ([02:31](#)):

And so there I was, that was my first time I was able to step in as a classroom teacher. So I enrolled, like you, in the non-traditional certification program through ADE and I did. I taught English, speech and journalism, and started as the newspaper advisor for the paper. Well, after really that first semester I was

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hooked. I had one student, now mind you, my newspaper staff had nine students in there, most of which did not even want to be in there, it was just a scheduling convenience.\.

Tammy Friend ([03:02](#)):

So there they were. And I will tell you that group became so close. In fact, the fact that it was small, I think added to the charm and that dynamic that we created. But this one particular student had transferred to the school because he had been in trouble at the other school and could not go back. And this child got involved in writing, I say child, they are children, but they're in high school, started writing for the paper. And I remember he would drive. He drove 45 minutes to come to school anyway.

Tammy Friend ([03:35](#)):

Well, this one day he was sick, but it was deadline. It was a deadline for the newspaper. Well, that was back before Google Drive or Google Classroom. So he drove to bring his flash drive, his thumb drive to school, because he didn't want to miss his deadline. And this is a student, he'd been in a school and in an alien environment and then he came to us. I won't forget that student, seeing the transformation, just really from building those relationships with that small class.

Susan Jobe ([04:08](#)):

Yeah. I love that. And even just that one story ties back to G.U.I.D.E. for Life because we do talk about building those positive relationships. You obviously had a learning environment happening in your classroom, where he felt like he belonged. And really helping our students to find out what their strengths are and to build on those, and so I love that story. So tell us, what made you decide to come to the department?

Tammy Friend ([04:32](#)):

We get so focused on the academic aspect, which is important, absolutely. It's vital. But my focus shifted from academic to the individual child. And I've always, always supported the whole child approach to education anyway. I mean, it is vital to nurture and support both the child's social, emotional, and cognitive. And then the pandemic hit and it was even more apparent that students, teachers, well, all school personnel, parents, were struggling. Being quarantined, that isolation, can really have an adverse effect on one's mental health. While they've always needed that support to be successful, as we were catching up students academically for that period, they needed that help socially and emotionally as well.

Susan Jobe ([05:27](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. So talk to us a little bit just about some of the supports that you offer through your office with G.U.I.D.E. for Life.

Tammy Friend ([05:36](#)):

I'm very proud of the curriculum actually, that you and your team of teachers, Arkansas teachers developed. There's approximately 200 lessons because they are by grade band, K2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and then 9-12 for each of the competencies, growth, understanding, interaction, decision-making and empathy. About 10 lessons per each personal competency, for each grade band. So that is a helpful resource,

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they're plug and play. Then of course the podcast. And I love it when you say, "It's PD on the go." And I've listened to them and it really is, at a different perspective, some insight has been very helpful.

Tammy Friend ([06:19](#)):

And then we have PD that we can offer such as maybe how to create a culture of learning in your classroom. Maybe if you're building or your district doesn't have an SEL program in place, our office can support that and help develop one using the guide as a model. We can provide guidance on teacher resilience, some tips there, and then culturally responsive teaching. I've seen some of your work and research on that and it's particularly interesting.

Susan Jobe ([06:52](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, and not only still that G.U.I.D.E. is such a great vehicle for so many things that we can use G.U.I.D.E. in anything. And as a classroom teacher, I wish I would've known the support that was available to me through the department. I know that that could have provided a lot of resources, a lot of opportunities for the students that I had in my classroom, if I would've just known how to plug in. And I'm really excited for our listeners and for teachers and administrators to get to know you. And I know that you're going to be a wonderful support to them. So let's talk a little bit about G.U.I.D.E. for Life and maybe your vision for G.U.I.D.E. moving forward.

Tammy Friend ([07:31](#)):

Well, really kind of what you just said, as far as getting the word out, maybe try some different avenues to continue to just the awareness, that it exists. There's a lot of social-emotional learning programs out there, some paid for, some free, like ours is. Of course, no charge and fully vetted and provided by the State. Really wasn't fully aware until stepping into this role, actually even prepping, even for my interview and learning more about it. And I was like, wow, in my oral comm class, I could have used this. This is a great resource.

Tammy Friend ([08:08](#)):

So definitely carrying on what you started as far as promoting and just making people, educators, schools, districts, counselors, aware, and then adding to it. I want partner with the digital learning unit to see about providing SEL training, using the G.U.I.D.E. for Life, for teachers, counselors, students. I would like to target higher ed. In fact, one of my guests that will be on a future podcast is from Williams Baptist University. And she's going to talk about how she integrates the G.U.I.D.E. into her instruction. As well as alternative education, I would like to work our way into that sector as well.

Susan Jobe ([08:50](#)):

[crosstalk 00:08:50] That's so awesome. Your background definitely lends itself to everything that you're going to be doing in this office. And so real quick, I just wanted to see if there were any fun facts you might want to share to help the audience get to know you a little bit better.

Tammy Friend ([09:03](#)):

Well, so I've always loved plays and musicals. Growing up, I was the bossy cousin, who at Christmas gatherings, you know when your whole extended family is there? I would always insist we have a play. And so we would go upstairs at aunt Mary's house and I would tell them exactly what they were going to

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do. I was both the playwright and the director. And so shockingly, they went along with it. Of course, it did usually turn out to be a musical because Maryanne could play the piano.

Susan Jobe ([09:34](#)):

I love it. I, love it.

Tammy Friend ([09:36](#)):

Yeah.

Susan Jobe ([09:36](#)):

Sounds fun.

Tammy Friend ([09:36](#)):

Yeah. So anyway, I ended up taking some theater classes and adding that to my teaching license so that I could teach and direct plays, and do all the fun things. And I'm currently directing Elf the Musical at the Royal Theater in downtown Benton, that will run the first two weeks of December. So that-

Susan Jobe ([09:53](#)):

That is so much fun. I love it. It's a lot of hard work and I know because I've done it, so.

Tammy Friend ([09:58](#)):

Yes, ma'am.

Susan Jobe ([09:59](#)):

That's exciting. How fun. Well, Tammy, I am thrilled to pass this baton to you, and I know that you're going to do a fantastic job. And we're just so happy to have you here at DESE. And I look forward to working with you and collaborating with you in the future. But really, I could not be leaving G.U.I.D.E. in better hands. And so I'm just tickled that you're here.

Susan Jobe ([10:21](#)):

And as we wrap up my last episode of this podcast, I wanted to bring somebody really special on. I call him the magic man. His name is Donnie Lee, and he's the guy that makes the magic of the podcast happen. He does the editing, the recording, and he fixes all of my mistakes. Well, the ones that are fixable.

Donnie Lee ([10:42](#)):

You don't have any mistakes, Susan. Ever.

Susan Jobe ([10:45](#)):

No, no.

Donnie Lee ([10:46](#)):

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You know, thank you, first of all, for trusting me to help you get the word out for G.U.I.D.E. for Life on this platform. Whenever we first started doing this, Susan was the second person to approach me about having a podcast on this crazy idea I'd came up with about creating a statewide, more or less podcast network of different programs. It's been fantastic. I couldn't have asked for a better collaboration and for a better person to have got to know over this last crazy two years of COVID, and doing this all on Zoom, and everything else that went down. But by golly, we made it happen and it's been great. And I'm really looking forward to working with Tammy, she's on fire. She's got- [crosstalk 00:11:39].

Susan Jobe ([11:39](#)):

Yeah she is.

Donnie Lee ([11:40](#)):

I have a whole list of emails in my inbox, she's after it. So more to come for sure.

Susan Jobe ([11:48](#)):

Yeah, it's going to be awesome. And we sure have had a lot of fun and a lot of laughs. And I just feel like I have a really good friend in you Donnie. And so I just want to thank you for everything. And-

Donnie Lee ([11:59](#)):

Hey, same here. This isn't farewell.

Susan Jobe ([12:02](#)):

No.

Donnie Lee ([12:02](#)):

This is just goodbye for now. We'll be back together I feel like, before long, so.

Susan Jobe ([12:08](#)):

For sure, for sure. Well, guys, I guess I'm going to wrap this up and you will be joined by Tammy Friend on the next episode of the G.U.I.D.E. for Life podcast.

Tammy Friend ([12:20](#)):

Thank you, Susan. Thank you, Donnie.

Donnie Lee ([12:23](#)):

Thank you, Susan. Thank you, Tammy.