



November 2009

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In this holiday season we are filled with gratitude for our many kind friends and neighbors who generously support the programs of the Human Services Council. This has been a challenging year for all of us; however, we hope you will consider supporting the Human Services Council by contributing to our 2009 Winter Appeal.

Since 1944, the Human Services Council, a regional community planning agency has promoted the well-being of communities through human service coordination, program sponsorship, education and training. The Human Services Council's motivating force has been the concern of a core group of citizens from Norwalk, Weston, Westport, Wilton and other nearby towns for achieving the best possible quality of life for all of our neighbors - particularly those who require a helping hand. The Human Services Council is host agency to a myriad of programs, including the Children's Connection, the Community Prevention Task Force, the Dr. Robert E. Appleby School Based Health Centers, the Mid-Fairfield Substance Abuse Coalition and the Voluntary Action Center of Mid-Fairfield County. While **ALL** of our programs - past and present - have played a critical role in the vitality of the greater Norwalk community we would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our newest addition – the **Norwalk Mentor Program**.

**DID YOU KNOW...**An astounding 17.6 million young people – nearly half the population of young people between 10 and 18 years of age – live in situations that put them at risk of not living up to their potential. In the State of Connecticut, there are 160,000 children who could benefit from a mentoring relationship because they are at risk for personal and academic failure as a result of poverty, family issues and incarcerated parents. Many young people face difficult circumstances: **1 out of 4** lives with only one parent, **1 out of 10** is born to teen parents, **1 out of 5** lives in poverty and **1 out of 10** will not finish high school. Of the **11,000** students enrolled in the Norwalk Public Schools, **2,000** of those students have one or more incarcerated parents (Governor's Prevention Partnership).

**PROGRAM IMPACT...**Established in 1986, the Norwalk Mentor Program is one of the longest running and most acclaimed programs in the country. In January 2009, the Norwalk Board of Education voted to transfer the coordination of the Norwalk Mentor Program to the Human Services Council – resulting in a partnership with the Norwalk Public Schools. The Norwalk Mentor Program is a school-based program that coordinates a structured one-on-one relationship between a student and an adult volunteer. This unique approach provides participants with an adult who can meet with them for approximately one hour per week during the school year. By sharing fun activities and exposing a youth to new experiences, a mentor encourages positive choices, promotes high self-esteem, supports academic achievement and introduces the mentee to new ideas. Most importantly, the mentor and mentee develop a fun, positive and trusting friendship. Current studies show that 98% of mentees reported being happy that they are a part of the Norwalk Mentor Program. When asked why on their program evaluation forms here is what some of the mentees wrote:

*“It feels like a treat.” (A third grade mentee from Naramake Elementary School)*

*“I am cause I have opened up more than I thought I would because when I was small I use to not talk to anyone except teachers ask me questions and when my mentor came I became more friendly and I have more fun and have more friends than I use to.” (A sixth grade mentee from Ponus Ridge Middle School)*

Human Services Council  
One Park Street . Norwalk, CT 06851  
Phone (203) 849-1111 . Fax (203) 849-1151  
[www.hscct.org](http://www.hscct.org)

*“It really helps a person grow, and gives tons of encouragement and hope, knowing that many people love and care for you.” (A senior from Brien McMahon High School)*

Currently, *conservative* estimates show that there are approximately 300 students in the Norwalk Public Schools on a waiting list for a mentor.

**A MENTOR’S STORY...**When I met my mentee she was a very shy first grader with very little self confidence. She had difficulty making friends and seldom had anyone to sit with her in the lunchroom. Over time, she started to open up to me and over the years we have built a trusting friendship. During our years together she shared her love of singing with me and often sang her favorite song to me. This year, as a fifth grader she told me that her school was having a Talent Show and she was thinking of participating. I was so excited. I encouraged her to participate and told her she had a beautiful voice and would do a great job. When I came to see her the next time she told me that she had spoken to the music teacher and she was going to be singing a solo in the Talent Show.

I was very excited that she had come to a place in her life where she had enough confidence to sing in front of the entire school. The day of the event I was excited but nervous for her. After several other performances, my mentee appeared on the stage dressed as Barbie in a white gown, with a long blond wig, in a six foot pink box the art teacher created which was titled “Barbie”, as she sang the song “Barbie Girl.” The crowd started to cheer and clap. She was the hit of the show. It was a “Hallmark” moment. This shy little girl had never been the center of attention in her entire life.

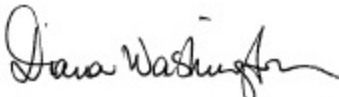
As I was leaving the school after the event, the Principal told me ‘you have definitely influenced this young girl, I would have never believed she would ever perform and stand out amongst all the students, you should be very proud.’

My influence was nothing more than being a friend, listening and reinforcing that she was a sweet girl and a special person.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP...**We urge you to make a contribution on behalf of the thousands of clients who benefit from the programs of the Human Services Council. Please keep these thoughts in mind...while economic hardships are facing each and everyone of us your contribution will make a difference – no matter how big or how small – a life will be changed because of you.

Thank you for being a friend to the Human Services Council. On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of HSC we send warm wishes for a holiday season filled with joy.

Sincerely,



Diana Washington  
President, Board of Directors



Betty A. Karkut  
Executive Director

P.S. Please remember that 90 cents of every dollar raised by the Human Services Council goes to support direct programming. It is because of your generosity that we are able to continue providing high quality services to our clients.



Your gift donation to the Human Services Council is a fitting tribute to someone special because with your help we can continue to provide important programs to the thousands of individuals we serve each year.

Yes! I would like to make a contribution in support of the Human Services Council.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ \$50 Friend \_\_\_\_ \$100 Supporter \_\_\_\_ \$250 Advocate  
\_\_\_\_ \$500 Benefactor \_\_\_\_ \$1,000 Leadership Circle \_\_\_\_ \$2,500 Championship Circle

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please make checks payable to the Human Services Council)

Please charge my credit card: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
CC Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 or 4 Digit Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Billing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

To donate on-line please visit [www.hscct.org](http://www.hscct.org)

The Human Services Council is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization.  
All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.