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# Norwalk's mentoring program celebrates 25 years

**NORWALK**  
By CAROL KING  
Hour Correspondent

The Norwalk Mentor Program continued its schoolwide roll-out Wednesday with a breakfast meeting at Norwalk High School.

The event was the eighth of 19 breakfasts that will occur in all of the city's public schools, said Jackie Effren, director of the Norwalk Mentor Program.

"We hold the launch at the beginning of each school year," she said.

The breakfasts reconnect existing mentors with their mentees, introduce new mentors to their students and celebrate the program, which pairs adults with youngsters who will benefit from nurturing, one-on-one relationships.

The program is celebrating its 25th year this school year.

Those in attendance at Wednesday's breakfast included state Sen. Bob Duff, D-25, Norwalk School Superintendent Susan Marks, Norwalk High School Principal Lenny Mecca and Jackie Roberson, a social worker at NHS who serves as a mentor to six high school girls in three school systems.

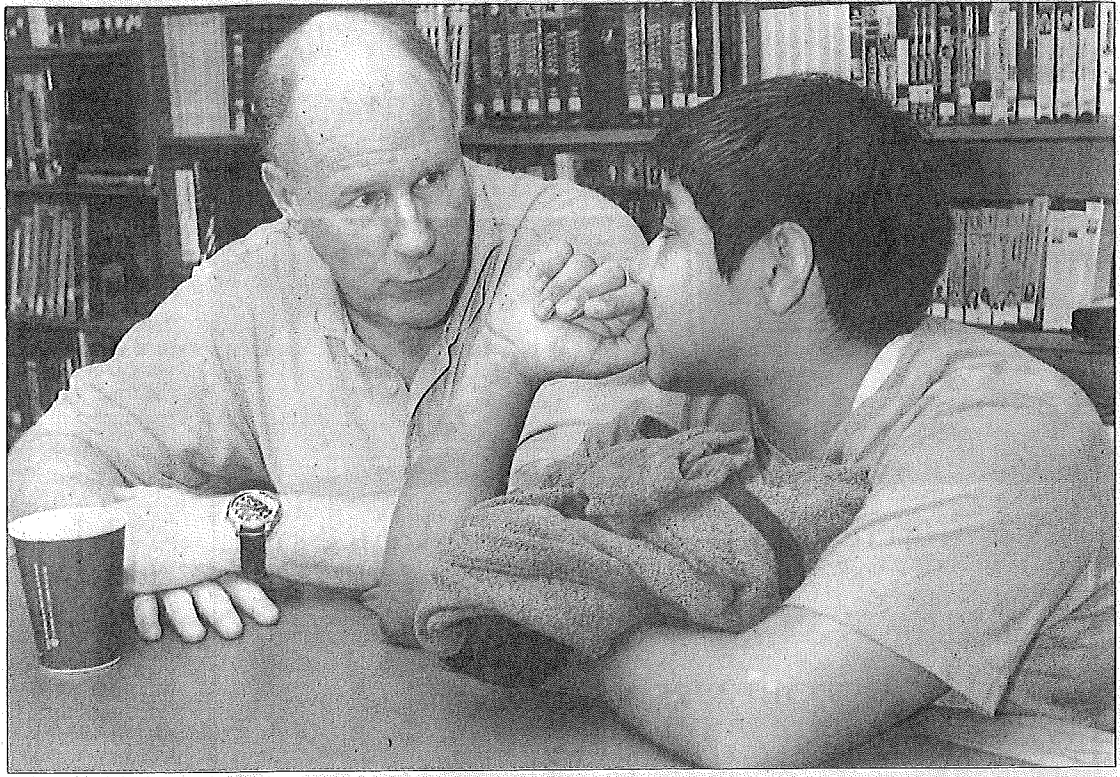
For Roberson, mentoring is a way of giving back.

"If someone had not taken interest in me while I was growing up, I would have become a statistic," she said. "A caring adult stepped in and made a difference in my life by pointing me in the right direction. I want to do the same for my girls. As mentors, this is an important role that we play. I feel like I have an impact on the next generation."

The mentoring program defines the city's dedication to supporting students, according to Marks.

"Relationships with both your fellow students and adults are important," she told the mentees in attendance. "Your mentors believe in you and won't give up on you. Most often, we respect those who hold us to higher standards. Your mentors support you because they know that you are the future."

Mecca expressed his gratitude to the mentors in attendance for the impact they have on students at



Hour photos / ERIK TRAUTMANN

Above, freshman Eduardo Garcia and his mentor, David Bernat, attend the Norwalk Mentor Program Mentor Kick-Off Breakfast Wednesday at Norwalk High School. Below, senior Aaron Ross talks with his mentor of seven years, Ann Jacoby.

Norwalk High.

"Grades and activities are important," he said. "But often we forget the importance of our students' relationships with adults who are significant in their lives. I want to thank you for caring about our students and helping them to make very important connections."

The experience of being a mentor is gratifying, Jerry Effren told *The Hour*.

"My daughter (Jackie Effren) recruited me to be a mentor. For the past two years, I have been working with a 14-year-old student, and the time I spend with him is the best hour I spend each week," he said. "We do a lot of talking, and I have been available to help him interface with the system. I am his advocate, and I find it very rewarding to be

making a difference in someone's life."

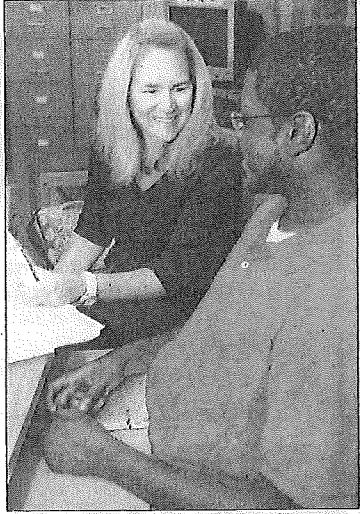
Bob Davis, age 82, has been working as a mentor for Ian, a high school senior, for the past 11 years.

"I love spending time with Ian," he said. "He is intelligent and personable, and I enjoy everything we do together. I probably get more out of this program than he does."

Conversely, Ian applauded Davis' support of him through the years.

"We've really become close," he said. During the session, both Jackie Effren and Duff expressed gratitude for a \$10,000 grant donated to the mentor program by AT&T.

"We are a global company, but we believe that the best way to connect



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BANQUETS

# Mentoring

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is between adults and children," said Harry Carey, director of external affairs for AT&T. Using a quote he found on the Internet, Carey said to the mentors, "To the world you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world."

The Norwalk Mentor Program is a program of the

Human Services Council in partnership with Norwalk Public Schools.

Marissa Mangone, director of development for the Human Service Council, reports that mentors are recruited year round and applications are welcome.

For more information on the mentor program, call (203) 849-1111.

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don't let the BED BUGS bite.**