

COMMENTARY

The Hour

Norwalk Mentor Program thanks mentors

To the Editor:

The Norwalk Mentor Program would like to share its wonderful accomplishments for the 2008-2009 school year with the Norwalk community. Based on the evaluations taken from school staff, mentors and mentees the following are our results:

School liaisons saw the following positive changes in our mentees lives: 74 percent have an increased sense of self confidence; 64 percent increased their grades while an additional 12 percent remained consistent with their grades; 72 percent have better relationships with other adults; and 54 percent have more confidence regarding future educational and career opportunities.

98 percent of mentees reported being happy that they were a part of the Norwalk Mentor Program. When asked why, a sixth grader from Ponus Ridge Middle School said "I am [happy be]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."

93 percent of mentors were satisfied with their match. When asked "what was the single most important thing you got out of the

program" one mentor said: "I just enjoy being able to hang out and play games with my mentee. I know that if I can go to his school, and make him smile and have fun, for that hour all his troubles have gone away, then it makes it all worth it".

Other positive outcomes of the program include 51 percent of mentors reported feeling more motivated at work because of mentoring, 76 percent feel more productive at work after mentoring, 89 percent have a better understanding of diversity issues and 73 percent of mentors reported that mentoring improved their relationships with others such as their children and spouse.

The Norwalk Mentor Program would like to thank the wonderful

130 mentors that take an hour each week to spend time with these wonderful students. As you can see the short time spent together makes a difference in the lives of the mentees and the mentors.

There are over 300 students on a waiting list for a mentor. If you would like more information, contact Jackie L. Effren, Program Coordinator at 203-849-1111 or jeffren@hscct.org or visit www.hscct.org/mentor. The Norwalk Mentor Program is a program of the Human Services Council in partnership with the Norwalk Public Schools.

*Jackie L. Effren
Coordinator, Norwalk Mentor
Program*

Letter Guidelines

We welcome readers' views, but retain the right to reject any letter and to edit for length and clarity. All letters are subject to editing. We require your name, address and phone number, to help us verify the authenticity of letters. Preference is given to letters offering fresh perspectives on timely topics. Keep letters at a reasonable length. Letters that run too long will not run in a timely manner and may not be printed at all. We do not publish: Anonymous letters, poetry, form letters generated by advocacy groups or letters published elsewhere. Send to letters@thehour.com, fax to 840-1802 or to 346 Main Ave., Norwalk CT 06851. Please submit by only one method.



Norwalk mentor program awarded \$10,000 AT&T Foundation

Norwalk Citizen-Staff

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The Norwalk Mentor Program, a program of the Human Services Council, in partnership with the Norwalk Public Schools, is a recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the AT&T Foundation, which will help the continuation of services for the next school year.

In January 2009, the Norwalk Board of Education voted to transfer the coordination of the Norwalk Mentor Program to the Human Services Council. The Norwalk Mentor Program's original premise remains constant today - matching deserving students with positive adult role models makes a significant difference in the lives of those students served.

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 them for approximately one hour per week during the school year and engage in activities conducive to the school setting. The primary purpose of a mentor is to help a young person define individual goals and find ways to achieve these goals. 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.

"We are so grateful for AT&T's generosity in helping this vital program to continue--a program that touches so many young lives," stated Jackie L.

Effren, coordinator of the Norwalk Mentor Program. "The benefits realized from mentoring have long lasting effects on youth, including improved school grades, attendance, self-confidence and relationships with others. Most of the mentees are so happy to have someone there just for them."

"We all know how critical having an engaged and caring mentor is when it comes to achieving success in school and in business," stated state Sen. Bob Duff. "AT&T's generosity will help ensure that more kids in Norwalk will be able to receive the valued support and perspective that a good mentor can give."

Mentors will continue to be recruited from the community (corporations, businesses and individuals) and matched with youth identified by the schools. Conservative estimates show there are approximately 350 students on a waiting list for a mentor right now.

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Being a mentor a most rewarding experience

To The Editor:

For the past 12 years I have been spending one hour a week mentoring with the Norwalk Mentor Program. I've been sharing my experiences, hopes, joys and concerns with a mentee who this year will graduate from high school.

My job as role model and counselor has been rewarded not only by this accomplishment but

by the close friendship we have established. Surprisingly, I find this experience has been as instructive to me as it has been to my mentee.

To anyone interested in making a difference in a young person's life, it's hard to beat giving an hour a week as a mentor.

*Roger Curtis
Westport*