

Mentoring *Matters*

An e-newsletter for the mentors of Chester County Futures, Inc.

July/August 2007

Welcome to the eleventh edition of Chester County Futures' monthly electronic mentor newsletter- Mentoring Matters. The purpose of this monthly newsletter is to provide a forum for communication and information.

Preparing your student for their future... **Goal Setting Tips**

Goal setting can be one of the most important parts of a mentoring relationship. Done in the right spirit, the process can help youngsters boost their self-confidence and make small but important steps toward their future aims. But goal setting can be fraught with difficulty. Getting young people to look past the present and into the future can be harder than trying to coax an elephant through a china shop. By the same token, getting mentors to understand that goals must originate within young people themselves, and must not be foisted upon them from the outside, can be equally difficult. How a mentor approaches this crucial juncture can either solidify a relationship or set it back.

In most cases, goal setting becomes a matter for discussion only after a mentor-mentee relationship has entered its mid-life. With the delicate get-acquainted period past them, mentors and their mentees typically spend less time making small talk and more time discussing substantive issues of their day to day lives: schoolwork, drugs, teen pregnancy, ethics, to name a few. By this point, mentors are not only well tuned in to the teen they are mentoring, they're often familiar with their mentees' parents, siblings and teachers. This is a time when the topic of educational goals and life plans naturally crops up.

Listening is the most important part of the mentoring relationship. By resisting the urge to prescribe solutions or pass judgements, a mentor gives a young charge the opportunity to think through problems and come up with objectives he or she can live with. As questions like: "what are you inclined to do, what are your choices, what do you think would happen if you chose this option?"

There is a risk involved in giving kids unwanted advice and that's that it may alienate them so much that they don't want to ask for help the next time. Many times mentors can help encourage goal setting by showing rather than telling. While exposure to the workplace, job shadowing and other opportunities to see their future in action can be great venues for getting youngsters to think into the future, so can the community at large. Community service projects that are interesting to both parties can provide a new found basis for conversation.

Futures' Student Services Division Can Help!

Passport to College Portfolio Project can give you an opening to help your student learn to set goals and build their credentials over their years in high school.

Futures' mentor/student community service projects can help you bond with your student while triggering important conversations.

Talk to your student about the Passport to College EXPO (August 17). Ask them questions about the workshop sessions and Expo booths. This will get them thinking about their plans for the future.

Encourage your student to participate in community based and in-school activities.

Ask your student to write one to three goals for the upcoming school year. Discuss how you can help them accomplish those goals.

Giving Voice to America's Silent Epidemic

Picture this: three little kids, shiny and excited, off to their first day of kindergarten. Now, picture this: about ten years later, only two of those children are still in school. One has dropped out.

The dropout rate in the United States has soared to epidemic heights; every year almost one third of all public high school students fail to graduate with their class. Many of these students abandon school with less than two years left.

This summer, educators, public policymakers, and members of the media as well as a panel of young people gathered at a National Summit on America's Silent Epidemic to bring continued attention to this crisis and to mobilize a call to action around a ten-point plan. One of those points—providing adult advocates and student supports—stresses the importance of mentoring for young people at risk on all levels from academics to quality of life.

“This summit highlighted what we in the mentoring field already know: mentors help kids complete school and achieve in life,” says Karen Nussle, senior vice president at MENTOR. “Having leading experts come together to discuss dropout rates, causes, and promising solutions and provide new tools to outline how best to address the dropout epidemic is both thrilling and essential.”

The “Silent Epidemic” Summit was spearheaded by John Bridgeland, CEO, Civic Enterprises, and was made possible by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Case Foundation, and the MCJ Foundation.

For information on the high school dropout crisis, go to www.silentepidemic.org. And for resources from the nation's most comprehensive source on mentoring, visit MENTOR at www.mentoring.org.

**Exciting
Opportunity
for Futures'
Students!!!!**

**Chester County Futures'
“Passport to College” Expo
August 17, 2007
9 am - 3 pm
Inn at Chester Springs, Exton**

Chester County Futures' Passport to College Expo is rapidly approaching. This premier event provides our students with exposure to over thirty booths covering topics ranging from financial aid to health and wellness. Student will also have the unique opportunity to visit with admissions representatives from over 17 colleges and universities!

After a morning of meeting with various colleges, gathering information on topics important to them and gaining the opportunities to win cool prizes including iPods, students will be treated to a luncheon featuring keynote speaker, Robb Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong grew up in West Philadelphia in a single parent family with five children. Money was scarce and the neighborhood rough but Robb managed to persevere, graduate from high school and college and establish a career as a successful cartoonist and motivational speaker. His jump start comic strip runs in the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Daily Local News. Lunch tickets are available at \$25 and are being sold in advance only. If you are interested in attending the luncheon, please contact Holly Parker at mentoroffice@ccfutures.org

The afternoon program will provide students with many opportunities to gain valuable information in a fun and interactive way. Workshops with topics ranging from financial aid to life/academic choices will be featured, along with an opportunity for students to chat with Futures' college students and a panel of inspirational adults.

For more information about this exciting event, please contact Holly Parker at 610-247-4961.

Mentoring Works!!!!

Youth development experts now agree that mentoring is a critical element in any child's social, emotional and cognitive development. It builds a sense of industry and competency, boosts academic performance and broadens horizons. Without doubt, young people who have the benefit of caring adult mentors navigate the path to adulthood more successfully.
-Mentoring.org

Chester County Futures Student Statistics

100% High School Graduation Rate

90% College Entrance Rate

72% College Graduation Rate



PNC Thorndale Branch Manager Joe Wilson (left) poses with the students.

Thanks to generous sponsorship from PNC Bank, a group of Chester County Futures' Coatesville students held a benefit car wash to raise money and awareness for Chester County Futures.



We want to hear from you!! Your feedback is crucial to the success of the Chester County Futures program.

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HAVE QUESTIONS??

We would like to feature your mentoring related questions in our monthly newsletter. It is important that we address your concerns. Please submit your questions to **Holly Parker** at mentoroffice@ccfutures.org