

Mentor Michigan News & Views

Mentoring resources that work for you

October 2008

Spotlight on
Mentoring

Recruiting
10,000 More
Mentors

Opportunities

In the
News

Feature
Article

About Mentor Michigan

Thousands of people are looking for ways to help others. Mentor Michigan harnesses that energy by supporting more than 200 mentoring organizations around the state – organizations that match caring adults with young people in need of role models.

Mentor Michigan strengthens those organizations through training, research, and partnerships with businesses, faith-based and nonprofit organizations, schools, colleges and universities, and government. Mentor Michigan also elevates public awareness of the positive impact of mentoring and the need for more quality mentors.

www.mentormichigan.org

Spotlight on Mentoring



Mentoring Can Make a Huge Difference in a Youth's Life

Jamie Whipple grew up on the west side of Michigan and was often considered an at-risk youth. She has moved and changed schools every year of her academic career, lived with numerous family members, and experienced multiple periods of homelessness. Jamie has also witnessed those around her struggle with alcohol and drug abuse, the legal system, and maintaining employment.

In 2004 Jamie's brother was to be matched through the Michigan State University Extension Journey 4-H Youth Mentoring program when she asked the program staff member if she could have a mentor too. In March of that year Jamie was matched with Michele Ripka.

Although struggles have continued to fill Jamie's life, her mentoring relationship with Michele has helped her to see past them. Since their relationship began they've discovered many common interests including reading, making bead jewelry, and volunteering. Their relationship has helped Jamie stay in school and taught her how to be a leader. In February 2008, she shared her personal story on a national webinar for mentoring program staff working with at-risk youth. She has also served on the

planning committee for two community events and found time to volunteer with Michelle in the Grand Haven area. Jamie and Michelle were also invited to participate in the 2006 Governor's Labor Day Bridge Run and completed the 5-mile run. On Monday, October 20, 2008 Jamie was a member of a youth panel at Michigan's Dropout Prevention Summit. She told the crowd of 500 participants that the key to preventing student dropout is support - youth need someone that will be there for them, listen to them, and see the best in them.

Jamie knows her life has been hard and she attributes her resilience to her relationship with Michele and the Journey 4-H staff who believe in her and her abilities.

"My mentor has been there for me. I can talk to her about a lot of things I can't talk to my mom about or my dad about or anyone in my family. She usually gives me more positive feedback wherein, if I try to talk to my mom or something, she is more negative" - Jamie's thoughts during the February 2008 Mentoring Webinar

Recruiting 10,000 More Mentors

Mentor Michigan Statewide Conference

Join mentoring professionals from around the state in East Lansing for Michigan's 3rd Annual Premier Mentoring Conference. It is sure to provide a variety of workshops focused on the most challenging issues affecting mentoring programs throughout the state. Plans are currently in place to present the following topics:

- Mentoring Hard-to-Reach Youth
- Orienting and Training Mentors
- Beginners/Advanced Social Marketing
- Children of Prisoners
- And many more!

The conference will also feature keynote speaker Craig Bowman of Common Ground Consulting, LLC. Bowman provides world-class consulting services for community-based, national, and international nonprofit/NGO organizations and specializes in the creation and implementation of youth and community development programming strategies. Bowman's presentation will analyze the economics of trust – offering real world, practical insights that will change how you spend your time. His session will also explore the impact of actively building and leveraging quality relationships as a tool for sustainability in social-profit organizations.

Another featured keynote will be Carl S. Taylor, Ph.D. of Michigan State University. Dr. Taylor's presentation "Two-Way Street: Communicating and Mentoring" maintains that the key to a strong relationship in mentoring is having open communication between both mentor and mentee. Join Dr. Taylor as he provides insight on how to improve match communication.

Registration is still available by visiting www.mentormichigan.org.



2009 Michigan Mentoring Month – SAVE THE DATE!

The annual January mentoring month is quickly approaching. Michigan Mentoring Month is designed to generate a concentrated burst of national, statewide, and local media activity. Combine this with community-based activities and you have the recipe to successfully recruit new mentors. Please mark your calendars now for important dates within the month, including Martin Luther

King, Jr. Day of Service on Monday, January 19, and Thank Your Mentor Day on Thursday, January 22. Both of these days provide great opportunities to get mentors and mentees involved in paying tribute to those who have made a difference. More information about the 2009 Michigan Mentoring Month will be available in the future at www.mentormichigan.org.

Making School a Priority

Every 26 seconds in America a student drops out of school. In fact, it is alarming to realize that one-third of America's students do not graduate on time from high school. Even more alarming, approximately half of all African-American and Hispanic students do not graduate on time. (Center for Educational Performance and Information Fact Sheet) The student's reasons are varied but often include feeling classes aren't interesting, they're too far behind to catch up, or they think it will be easier to get a GED. Regardless, the epidemic is spreading with approximately 1.2 million students dropping out across the country each year. (America's Promise Alliance)

For those that do not graduate the impact is profound. Dropouts are 15 percent less likely to be employed, and those who do find jobs earn 30 percent less than their peers who hold a regular diploma or GED. And, according to a 2007 report entitled "The Costs and Benefits of Excellent Education for America's Children", American taxpayers could reap \$45 billion annually if the number of high school dropouts were cut in half. Extra tax revenues, reduced costs of public health, crime and justice, and decreased welfare payments would be areas exhibiting the most increased savings. (Columbia University Teachers College)

In Michigan it's been documented that 25,000 young people drop out of school on an annual basis. Lowering the dropout rate and helping as many students as possible earn a diploma has always been a priority in Michigan. In December 2007, Governor Jennifer Granholm established a workgroup chaired by the state Superintendent of Public Instruction to explore additional ways to assist schools and districts to improve their graduation rates.

The Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) is also working to turn these statistics around. The programs under Learn and Serve – Michigan, Mentor Michigan, and Michigan's AmeriCorps continually take creative and strategic steps to help alleviate the dropout crisis.

Learn and Serve – Michigan annually engages over 25,000 K-12 students in community service connected to their classroom learning. Students involved in service-learning address critical community needs and solve real-life problems. These unique learning opportunities connect students to their communities and schools and give them an opportunity to be part of the solution – not part of the problem. Students who feel this connection are more likely to remain in school. More than 75 percent of all students, including current and past students in service-learning programs, and at-risk students who did not participate in service-learning, agree that service-learning classes are more interesting than other classes and help keep them engaged. (Engaged for Success: Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention)

Mentor Michigan is a statewide network of more than 200 mentoring programs that works to increase the number of youth who have stable and caring adults in their lives. Mentor Michigan recruits talented and committed mentors who provide guidance and support to youth considered at-risk throughout Michigan. Annually, 35,000 children are mentored. Research has shown that children with mentors are 52 percent less likely to skip school. Students with mentors are more confident and improve their academic performance.

Michigan's AmeriCorps is a national service program designed to strengthen citizenship and the ethic of service in communities throughout the state. Michigan's AmeriCorps currently has 19 programs. Many of the programs focus on benefitting youth by assisting them in our outside school, and by engaging them in activities to decrease the enticement to drop out. AmeriCorps members provide tutoring or homework help, develop a mentoring relationship with a youth, conduct after-school activities to keep youths engaged, or provide some other form of support critical to a student's potential success. During the 2007-2008 program year, 346 Michigan's AmeriCorps members engaged 13,703 youth through their service programs that helped combat the dropout problem.

The Michigan Community Service Commission takes pride in knowing that the programs it funds are effective in addressing the state's dropout issue. The programs funded by the MCSC will continue state of the art efforts to reduce Michigan's dropout rate by developing and implementing preventative tools and activities. To find out more about the MCSC, its programs, and potential funding opportunities, please visit www.michigan.gov/mcsc.



Mentoring PSAs Featuring Lloyd Carr

Mentor Michigan has named former University of Michigan football coach Lloyd Carr as its newest champion for recruiting mentors. Carr has come out of retirement to recruit for a new type of team, a team of mentors to match with Michigan's young people. Lloyd Carr has filmed two public service announcements (PSAs) aimed at recruiting mentors. These PSAs will be distributed to Mentor Michigan's partner organizations who will then distribute them to local media outlets. We are excited to have Lloyd Carr, with his legendary history of creating winning teams,

Speak out about the importance of mentoring and the need for more mentors, especially males.

If you would like to obtain copies of the Lloyd Carr PSAs, please **click here** for the Mentor Michigan PSA Request Form.

Opportunities

Local Opportunities

November 13

Poverty Summit

Governor's Commission on Community Action & Economic Opportunity and the Department of Human Services

Cobo Hall - Detroit, MI

For more information visit www.michigan.gov/poverty.

November 17

Mentor Michigan Statewide Conference

Kellogg Center – East Lansing, MI

For more information visit www.mentormichigan.org.

January 19

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Corporation for National and Community Service & Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change

Statewide & Nationwide

For more information visit www.mlkday.org.

January 22

Thank Your Mentor Day

MENTOR

Statewide & Nationwide

For more information visit www.mentoring.org.

National Opportunities

October 30 – November 2

National Mentoring Conference – Concerned Black Men

Tremont Plaza Hotel and Conference Center

Baltimore, MD

For more information, visit <http://cbmnational.org/cbm-news-and-events-2/concerned-black-men-national-mentoring-conference-2008>.

Job Opportunities

Do you run a mentoring organization and are looking for some great employees? If you are, then this is the section for you. Mentor Michigan will market your job postings for free in the Mentor Michigan monthly newsletter. Simply fill out the job posting template and send it to verberkmoese@michigan.gov. Questions or comments? Please call or email Elyse at 517-241-0063 or verberkmoese@michigan.gov.

In the News

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Awarded \$8.6 Million Grant

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America will be awarded a \$8,615,538 grant by the U.S. Department of Justice. The grant will help BBBS expand its truancy prevention initiative. Truancy increases the risk of many negative outcomes according to the DOJ, including the following: educational failure, social isolation, substance abuse, low self-esteem, unwanted pregnancy, unemployment, violence, adult criminality and incarceration. BBBS' DOJ funding will help to address this urgent need throughout the country. For more information, visit www.bbbs.org.

SafetyNET Background Checks Extended Through 2009

Proponents of the Child Protection Improvements Act have managed to secure a full one-year extension of the SafetyNET criminal background check pilot. The extension will now run until January 31, 2010 and means mentoring programs will continue to have access to FBI background checks for mentoring programs through the Child Safety Pilot.

- Information courtesy of MENTOR

Feature Article

Standard 10 Revisited: ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Submitted by: Dara Munson, President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit and a member of the Mentor Michigan Provider's Council

Solid organizational management is key to the success of any non-profit agency. While all of the sub-points of this standard are critical, two key sub-points are highlighted here.

It is extremely necessary for the composition of personnel, volunteers and program participants to be diversely reflective of the community the organization serves. When looking to generate additional partnerships; raise additional funds and recruiting additional volunteers, agencies must recognize the importance of this focus and incorporate it as a strategy for both programmatic and revenue growth. This is more than counting the number of people representing certain races or ethnicities on the Board or employed by the agency. Diversity and inclusion strategies begin at the top but often fall short of what is needed in order to build a strong organization. This type of intentionality must be placed around every facet of the agency's operation: Leadership, operation and execution. There are qualified individuals who can serve in an extraordinary way in Board and staff leadership positions but may be overlooked.

Diversity in Board, staff, and program participants creates a more meaningful and rich experience for everyone involved in the agency's operation and should be viewed as a strategy that will positively impact the bottom line. Agencies must look at race, ethnicity, sector representation, geographic representation, and gender mix when considering what is needed to create a healthy leadership profile. This will bring about more productive decision-making processes and a more varied pool of skills will be brought to further advance the agency's mission by drawing on different perspectives. Diversity of opinions and cultures delivers a higher quality of the product, i.e. longer, stronger mentoring relationships.

Further, staff members must be able to relate to program participants in order for them to have a positive and productive experience with the agency. For example, if an agency serves a largely Spanish speaking community but has no Spanish speaking employees, an immediate disconnect will surface. While this is a very concrete example, it should not be dismissed as elementary. Agency employees must understand and be sensitive to the dynamics of the families they serve. Relationships created by agency staff and program participants is key and making sure they are strong creates the motivation for agency staff to continuously improve processes ensuring all participants are receiving the full benefits of the mentoring program. The end goal is obviously to be able to serve more children and to serve them better. Making certain the composition of Board, staff, and participants is diverse and reflective of the community served is paramount to achieving this goal.

The second sub-point to be highlighted has to do with **public relations** and **communications**. It is crucial for the entire community to understand not only the need for more mentors but the impact and result the mentoring community creates. Agencies must have a strategic, comprehensive plan to continuously engage and educate the community at large. Plans should include multiple vehicles to do outreach and education. These communication vehicles include traditional methods like websites, newsletters, and e-news blasts but should also include more innovative outreach methods like the online communities of MySpace, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Board members, current and former mentors and mentees should also be considered as deliverers of the mentoring message.

At certain times throughout the year, there will be a need for *targeted marketing* efforts. Launching large scale mentor recruitment initiatives or kicking off major fund raising campaign call for this targeted approach. However, it's always a good time to employ public relations efforts. When there is an article, research finding, or breaking news that has to do with educational issues, juvenile justice issues, or public safety, mentoring should be lifted up as a change agent; a key part of the solution.

Media engagement is an effort that takes time to develop but has great potential for payoff. As more media personalities understand the impact of mentoring and are invited to partner, they become energized about ways to promote on our behalf. Media engagement does not have to be a costly strategy. Media personalities that have an affinity for children often enjoy helping move the needle on a campaign. It is always important to have a hook or something they can easily understand and have them

focused on the end goal within a specified timeframe, i.e. Recruiting 100 Mentors in 100 Days.

Lastly, strategic *key messages* cannot be discounted. Agencies must be clear on the messages they share with stakeholders. While the content of delivery may vary depending on the audience or event, it is imperative we are clear on the key messages. I recommend staying focused on no more than three key messages. People need to be able to see themselves as part of our work; they need to attach themselves to the mission and if there are too many messages buried in the content, they will become lost in the words. This is especially true when it comes to mentor recruitment and ultimately mentor retention for which the focus should be what, when and how.