



YouthFriends®

Organization Fact Sheet

- YouthFriends, in partnership with school districts, connects young people with caring adult volunteers in schools to promote success, encourage healthy behaviors and build stronger communities.
- YouthFriends accomplishes its mission by providing free, comprehensive technical assistance to school districts in Greater Kansas City seeking to initiate and manage successful school-based mentoring efforts that meet the Elements of Effective Practice™.
- YouthFriends was created in 1995 as an initiative of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation in partnership with six area school districts through a \$500,000 grant from Amelior Foundation through MENTOR.
- YouthFriends has undergone steady growth since 1995. Currently, YouthFriends partners with more than 70 school districts across Kansas and Missouri. As a result of YouthFriends support, these districts have placed more than 39,000 screened and trained mentors positively affecting the lives of more than 260,000 young people in one-to-one and small group relationships in school.
- YouthFriends technical assistance includes training for school district personnel; easy-to-implement volunteer marketing, recruitment, screening, training, matching and retention tools and tactics as well as leading edge volunteer tracking technology, risk management and evaluation strategies. With YouthFriends, school districts are assured of a proven, turn-key mentoring program that is cost-effective and easily implemented.
- YouthFriends is characterized by a number of innovations that distinguish it from other mentoring efforts. Among them is Via® its secure, password protected Internet-based volunteer information management system that tracks and documents volunteers, their activities and time invested. Via integrates every aspect of the YouthFriends school-based mentoring model into a single tool and provides valuable reports that facilitate volunteer management and accountability to stakeholders.
- In addition to traditional mentoring activities, YouthFriends volunteer opportunities include academic mentoring, literacy support, e-Mentoring, ESL (English as a Second Language) Mentors and YouthFriends Corps for high school students mentoring elementary students in their own school district.
- Recent evaluations of YouthFriends by independent evaluators show that students with YouthFriends show improvements in academics, attitudes toward themselves and others and connectedness to school—an important predictor of graduation rates. Fully 99% of YouthFriends volunteers would recommend it to others and 66% have done so.