



YouthFriends®

Fall 2007 • Volume 12 • No. 2
News



Mentors Make Great People Possible • youthfriends.org

If each of our current YouthFriends successfully recruited just one new volunteer, we could meet our goal of connecting 10,000 caring adult mentors with students in area schools.

— Lisa Adkins, President

Invite Your Friends to Mentor

People tend to surround themselves with others whose interests and values are similar to their own. That's why YouthFriends is asking all of its current volunteers to invite a friend – or several friends – to become YouthFriends Mentors.

"If each of our current YouthFriends successfully recruited *just one* new volunteer, we could meet our goal of connecting 10,000 caring adult mentors with students in area schools," said Lisa Adkins, YouthFriends president.

So, whether it's your neighbors, friends, co-workers or business associates, chances are, they might be interested in becoming YouthFriends Mentors—but first they need to be asked.

So how do you ask? It's really simple! Here are some suggestions:

- Let them know that they are needed. More than 40,000 students in the Greater Kansas City area alone would benefit from having a YouthFriends Mentor.
- Assure them that they can do it—they simply need to be a good friend who listens.
- Let them know it's easy to get involved at a school near their home or work. More than 100 schools and school districts in Kansas and Missouri are involved in YouthFriends Mentoring.
- Finally, help them get started. If you don't have applications on hand, you can call us, or visit youthfriends.org and print as many as you need.

YouthFriends Make Great Recruiters

- Current volunteers are YouthFriends best recruiters. More than 60 percent of all YouthFriends Mentors learned about YouthFriends through someone they know.
- A recent survey conducted by Bernstein-Rein found that of the YouthFriends surveyed, 49 percent who had asked someone to volunteer said that person accepted.

And if you don't have time to ask people to get involved, just let us know and we'll do the asking for you! Simply call us or complete the enclosed refer-a-friend card and we'll follow up within 24 hours.

If it's a group you'd like to get involved (such as your company, place of worship, etc.), you can call us to request to have a YouthFriends representative make an on-site presentation.

For assistance in Greater Kansas City and Missouri, call 816.842.7082 or 877.842.7082. In Kansas call 620.724.6281 or 800.563.0472.

In This Issue:

2 Conversation Tips for Mentors
Find out ways to make ordinary conversations with your YouthFriend extraordinary.

Opening New Worlds Through YouthFriends e-Mentoring
New online tool will help students and mentors connect online.

3 Through the Years
Male mentors make a difference in the lives of area students. Take a look into three longtime YouthFriends relationships that combined total nearly 30 years.



4 YouthFriends Corps
High school senior makes learning fun for second grader.



Employers Help Launch YouthFriends Partner Alliance

Initiative helps employers achieve workplace goals through YouthFriends involvement

For nearly 13 years, hundreds of Greater Kansas City employers have been partnering with YouthFriends to realize their community outreach goals and to positively impact the lives of area young people and K-12 education.

Now, leaders from several employer partners have joined together to help launch the YouthFriends Partner Alliance, designed to further strengthen partnerships between YouthFriends and area businesses. Through twice-yearly meetings, members of the YouthFriends alliance will:

- Provide feedback on support and services desired by employer partners
- Share best practices across organizations
- Host a forum for professional networking
- Promote internal marketing and awareness for YouthFriends and UpLink
- Increase effective internal recruitment for YouthFriends and UpLink
- Develop and implement strategies to increase and sustain business and organizational involvement in YouthFriends and UpLink

- Recruit additional partners for YouthFriends and UpLink participation
- Serve as community ambassadors for YouthFriends and UpLink

Companies spearheading the effort include American Century Investments, Archer Technologies, Bernstein-Rein, Hallmark Cards, Inc. and *The Kansas City Star*.

"We're excited to be a part of this effort," said Neil Neumeyer, corporate communications manager for Bernstein-Rein. "The services that YouthFriends offers make it so easy for our company and our associates to volunteer and make a difference in the lives of young people in Greater Kansas City—it's something we know other employers can benefit from being a part of, and we want to do our part to help make that happen."

The YouthFriends Partner Alliance is open to employers and organizations in formal partnership with YouthFriends or UpLink programs. To get your company involved, contact Rachel Plotkin, YouthFriends client services director, at 816.268.5911 or plotkin@youthfriends.org.

Ordinary Conversation: An Extraordinary Opportunity

By simply engaging in ordinary conversations with their mentees, YouthFriends volunteers have an opportunity to help students develop into confident young adults.

Consider this: When students engage in conversations with adults who appreciate and respect them, they likely will emulate those adults. So no matter what the topic, all conversations can be valuable learning experiences—when approached with respect.

In *The Journal of Moral Education*, author Nel Noddings wrote, “many children and adolescents lack opportunities to engage in real conversation with adults. They have brief exchanges, of course, and perhaps more than enough warnings and direct instruction: wear your heavy jacket, wipe your feet,

finish your breakfast, clean your room, feed the dog, and so on. Some badly neglected children do not even receive this, but I am referring to real conversation in which all parties speak, listen and respond to one another. For many young people, this is a rare experience.”

Therefore, it is important for adults to take students’ opinions seriously. Rather than approaching conversations with young people as “cute” or smiling when they express their opinions on serious topics, adults should listen attentively and acknowledge their opinions.

For more mentoring tips, visit the Mentoring Resources section of youthfriends.org.

How to make ordinary conversations extraordinary

1. Listen more than you talk.
2. Be honest with your mentee about what you do and do not know about a topic.
3. Keep it simple—be brief and clear. Too much information can be boring.
4. Ask for your mentee’s opinion and respect his or her views.
5. Be calm. If you’re anxious, your mentee will be anxious. If you’re calm, he or she can be calm, too.

Opening New Worlds Through e-Mentoring

YouthFriends e-Mentoring enables even the busiest professionals from YouthFriends Employer Partners to mentor students through weekly e-mail exchanges.

Larry Berg, the YouthFriends Coordinator for the Bonner Springs/Edwardsville (Kan.) School District, knows firsthand how valuable e-mentoring can be to both students and volunteers. This year alone, Berg has matched 179 high school seniors with 119 e-mentors from companies throughout Greater Kansas City.

The appeal of e-mentoring is simple, Berg said.

“E-mentoring allows busy professionals that can’t get away from the desk the opportunity to become YouthFriends,” he said.

And e-mentoring offers students unlimited learning opportunities. Teachers might want e-mentors to connect with students working on a science, engineering or physics project or perhaps with those in an English class who are seeking to improve communications skills.

E-mentoring takes a minimum of 30 minutes per week (usually for a semester or longer) and is under the guidance of classroom teachers.

In early 2008, e-mentoring will become even easier and more efficient for school districts and volunteers thanks to the introduction of MentorMail, an easy-to-use, secure, online system that facilitates communication between e-mentors and students (see sidebar).

Like all YouthFriends volunteers, e-mentors complete a volunteer application and are carefully interviewed, screened and trained.

National research on successful e-mentoring programs shows substantial benefits to both students and e-mentors. Students involved in e-mentoring show improvements in reading, writing and computer skills, as well as increased interest in schoolwork.

Contact Melissa Gingell (gingell@youthfriends.org) at 816.268.3345 to learn about available e-mentoring opportunities at area schools. Once an opportunity is selected, a School District Coordinator will help employees complete the application process, which includes screening and mentor training that can be offered on-site.

MentorMail Coming Soon



MentorMail is an innovative online system developed by YouthFriends to make e-mentoring easy, safe and worthwhile. It is designed exclusively for the use of YouthFriends e-Mentoring participants.

Key features of MentorMail include:

- Security: Students and mentors have their own MentorMail accounts, user names and passwords so no e-mails are exchanged through business or personal addresses.
- Filter: Messages with inappropriate language, URLs, attachments or contact information will be flagged for review and will not be sent to the recipient unless approved first by a school-based project manager.
- Archive: All MentorMail correspondence is permanently stored in the archive.

MentorMail is now being piloted and will release in early 2008. For more information, contact 816.842.7082.



The Power of a Pen

Board member shares advice of his mentors

At a recent meeting involving more than 100 students participating in the Kauffman Scholars Initiative, YouthFriends Board Member Merrell Bennekin explained to students how important mentors have been in his life—throughout high school, law school and even now, as the outreach coordinator for the Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners.

When a student asked Merrell to share the most important lesson a mentor ever gave him, he responded with the advice of his mentor at Morehouse College: “Always carry a pen with you,” he said. “You never know when someone is going to tell you something you need to write down.”

Now 32, Merrell still carries a pen with him wherever he goes.

Inspiring the Future Workforce

New volunteer opportunity connects classrooms to careers

In January, YouthFriends will begin training Greater Kansas City area volunteers interested in becoming classroom speakers through the LaunchPad volunteer speakers bureau.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to give brief classroom presentations that introduce K-12 students to various fields of work and help teachers bring real-world relevance to subjects being taught in their classrooms. Volunteers can commit to presenting as often as they chose (with a minimum commitment of four times per year).

How it works

Through LaunchPad’s online database, speakers will post information about their expertise, availability and preferred age groups and school districts. Teachers can then access the database throughout the year to review speaker profiles and “book” speakers, allowing the matching process to occur online.

How to get involved

Current and new volunteers are encouraged to participate. Getting started is easy; here’s what you do:

Current volunteers

1. Sign up to attend a one-hour training session (see calendar, right)
2. Upon successful completion of training, enter your profile in the classroom speakers database

New volunteers

1. Download and complete a YouthFriends application from youthfriends.org (classroom speakers are not required to complete the

reference section of the application)

2. Attend a one-hour training session
3. Upon successful completion of training, enter your profile in the classroom speakers database

Teachers can begin booking speakers online beginning Jan. 21, 2008. For more information, contact Alisha Gambino at 816.842.2709 or visit youthfriends.org or yf-uplink.org.

Classroom Speakers Training Sessions

(Sessions will take place at the YouthFriends Central office, 1800 Baltimore, Suite 400, Kansas City, Mo. 64108)

Jan. 16	11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Jan. 22	4-5 p.m.
Feb. 6	11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Feb. 19	4-5 p.m.
March 5	11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
March 11	4-5 p.m.
April 2	11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
April 9	4-5 p.m.

To sign up for training, please contact Alisha Gambino at 816.842.2709 or gambino@youthfriends.org.

About LaunchPad

Operated by YouthFriends, LaunchPad connects K-12 classrooms to careers through classroom speakers, job shadowing and internships, with an emphasis on exposing students to work involving math, engineering, technology and science.



Through the Years: Male Mentors Make a Difference

Research shows that young men with one or more positive male role models in their lives are more likely to develop the academic and social skills they need to become successful adults. The following stories take a look at three multi-year YouthFriends relationships—each demonstrating the tremendous impact that male mentors can have on young men, as well as the impact that students have on their mentors.



Jason Christenson (left) has become a good friend and role model to Matt (right) in the Blue Valley School District.

Blue Valley, Kan.

As adults, it isn't difficult to see the impact a YouthFriend can have on a child. But to hear students describe the impact their YouthFriends have had on their lives is powerful. Such is the case with two seniors in the Blue Valley School District who recently took time to explain how having a YouthFriends Mentor has made a difference in their lives and their future.

Matt was in fourth grade when he first met his YouthFriend, Jason Christenson (an employee of Abbott Laboratories). At first it was great to have someone to talk to other than his mother, Matt said. But soon, Jason became a good friend and a male role model—someone Matt could look up to and be inspired by.

"It was nice to have him talk and hang out and be my friend," Matt said. "I used to hate school, but then every Tuesday I got to see Jason and it all became a lot more bearable."

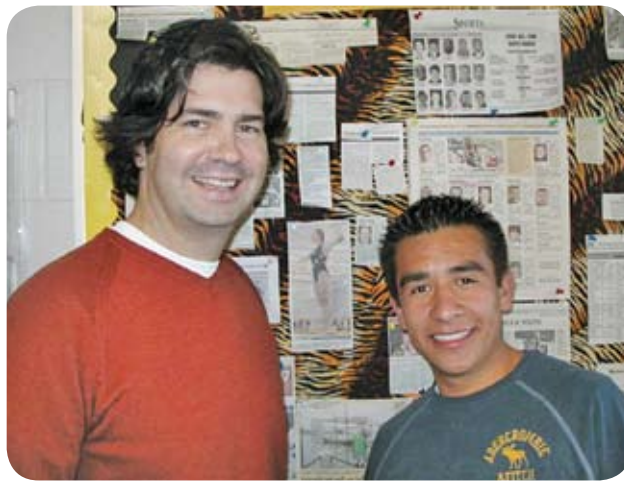
Not long after his visits with Jason began, Matt became more connected to school. They would often talk about school, life, friends and even the Chiefs games. Their weekly visits became something each looked forward to. As Matt approaches graduation, they each know that their friendship will continue and they plan to keep in touch.

"You don't have to change your life to be a part of your YouthFriend's life," Matt said. "That extra boost really helps a lot."

Robertino, also a senior, first met his YouthFriend, Aaron McKee (an employee of InfoSpace, Inc.) when he was in middle school. When he and his family moved to the Blue Valley area from Mexico, Robertino needed a little assistance in some areas of school. Aaron spoke Spanish and had an interest in helping Robertino in any way he could. A match was made.

With frequent visits from Aaron, Robertino's grades improved, as well as his confidence. The two have formed a close friendship and know that they will be friends in the future.

"It was really cool when I got to meet him," Robertino said. "He's impacted my life and taught me a lot. I've learned so much from him."



Aaron McKee (left) is a YouthFriend to Robertino (right) in Blue Valley.

Kansas City, Mo.

For nearly a decade, Mike Vieux (a senior project manager at JE Dunn Construction) has been mentoring Darrell, now a freshman in the Kansas City, Missouri School District.

"I started with him in the first grade and now he is in the ninth grade," Mike said.

So what keeps him coming back?

"I've always liked mentoring kids," he said. "In fact, I have five of my own."

Mike and his wife, Joan, also have cared for foster children over the years. But it is his relationship with Darrell that inspires him to continue mentoring.

"I'm committed to him," he said. "I've told Darrell on several occasions I'm going to be here for him until he goes to college."



Darrell (left) has been meeting with his YouthFriend, Mike Vieux, for nearly a decade. Mike has followed Darrell to every school he has attended.

The bond between the two has not gone unnoticed by people around them.

"Mike and Darrell are an excellent example of what YouthFriends is all about," said Pam Kotelov-Glickman, YouthFriends Coordinator for the Kansas City, Missouri School District. "Mike is committed to seeing Darrell cross the stage and accept his diploma. It is wonderful for a YouthFriend to follow a student to four different schools; I think this shows the commitment Mike has to Darrell."

Mike says he'll never forget Darrell's expression at the end of one school year when he asked Mike if he was coming back again. That is when he told Darrell he was staying until he went to college.

Although the pair usually eats lunch, talks and plays games, Mike emphasizes that mentoring is more than fun and games. Beginning a mentoring relationship takes patience and time, he says.

"Although it can seem painful sometimes to leave the office, you will be glad when you get there (to school)—it's well worth it."

In Their Own Words

YouthFriends Mentors have inspired our kids to think about things they have never thought about. Having them working one-to-one with students made me realize that if we were going to meet our benchmarks and make some strides, we were going to need outside help.

— High School Math Teacher, Kansas City, Kansas School District

I can always count on my YouthFriend visit to be a breath of fresh air away from the office. Sometimes it's the only time all week that I don't eat lunch at my desk.

— YouthFriends Mentor



Big Impact, Small Community

In just two years, YouthFriends pilot becomes community-wide effort

Today, "expansion" is the buzzword for the Clay Center (Kan.) YouthFriends effort.

In the winter of 2005, para-educator Bob Stratton learned about YouthFriends and encouraged then-principal Kristen Ryan to research the prospect of implementation. The local school board authorized Ryan to pilot YouthFriends at the Clay Center Community Middle School (CCCMS). Equally devoted to the school-based mentoring plan, teachers Alice Bachand, Sharon Beems and counselor Kristin Wright joined forces.

For two years, YouthFriends middle school mentoring has continued to thrive, thanks to the support of the community, school administration, business partners and caring citizens. As a result, the effort has now grown to include all attendance centers in the Clay Center community.

YouthFriends Corps high school mentoring also has been initiated as a course in the Clay Center Community High School (CCCHS) under the guidance of instructor Cindy Clack. More than 35 students have been trained as mentors and assigned to classrooms throughout the school system.

YouthFriends will now serve students from kindergarten through third grade at Lincoln Elementary School, with 15 newly trained YouthFriends Mentors to commence the program. YouthFriends will be connected this year with fourth and fifth grade students at Garfield Elementary School, as well.

The YouthFriends program is definitely making a big impact in the Clay Center community. Keep an eye out for news about this expanding and booming effort.



YouthFriends Corps Creating Connections

High school mentor makes learning fun for second grader

Seven-year-old Christian and high school senior Matt McKinley are great examples of the positive connections that can be made through YouthFriends Corps high school mentoring. Matt and Christian read together two to three times a week in Kathy Brown's second grade class at Glenwood Ridge Elementary. "Matt helps me with learning my letters and saying my words right," Christian said. "I like it when he comes. He's cool. He listens to me and we talk and stuff."

This is Matt's second year as a YouthFriends Corps high school mentor, also known as a "Care Cat" within Basehor Linwood USD 458. He has earned more than 150 hours in three semesters, making him the top Care Cat among 70, and the 2007 homecoming's district honoree.

"I have a job outside of school that pays me money," Matt said. "What I do as a Care Cat pays me in other ways—smiles, high fives. Christian gets this accomplished look on his face when he is able to read a sentence for the first time...putting together all the words...it's not easy. I get such a kick out of being there and hearing the happy in his voice when he reads."

As a young reader, Matt remembers that he also struggled at times.

"Having a YouthFriend makes all the difference," he said. I look back and I remember the people that I read to. I would have liked to have had a YouthFriend, too. This is such an important program for high school kids like me and for the students we get to mentor. I've never thought of myself as a role model but I can see myself in Christian's eyes and it is amazing."

Christian's mother, Christina, is grateful for the difference Matt has made in her son's life.

"I think it [the YouthFriends Corps program] is excellent," she said. "Christian loves the time he gets to spend with Matt—he is such a great support. I know Christian loves to read with his Dad and me – and his teacher too – but it's just special with Matt."

Basehor Linwood USD 458 is unique in that it offers YouthFriends Corps as a high school elective class for half-credit as a pass/fail. The class is available each semester to juniors and seniors. All service hours go toward the National Points of Light certificate, college entry requirements, a silver honor cord at commencement and a well-rounded résumé.



During the Basehor Linwood USD 458 homecoming parade, YouthFriends Corps "Care Cat" senior Matt McKinley (center) was recognized for more than 150 hours of service—the most of any Care Cat this year. Proudly riding along with Matt is his second grade YouthFriend, Christian (left), and Christian's eighth grade brother, Corey (seated). Seated right: Top district YouthFriend, Ruby Wiley, honored for more than a decade of community service in USD 458 classrooms.

What's new at youthfriends.org?

Be sure to visit the newly redesigned YouthFriends web site to learn more about the following news—and more!

► Mentoring tips and resources

Looking for tips on becoming a better mentor, or for fun activities to share with your YouthFriend? Look no further. An extensive list of resources is now available in the newly expanded Mentoring Resources section of youthfriends.org. Included in the list is information about *Willie's ABC Day*,



a new children's book illustrated by Clay Center (Kan.) YouthFriends Coordinator Sharon Beems (left).

► More R&R Card discounts now available

Several new businesses are offering discounts to YouthFriends R&R Cardholders. A complete list is available at youthfriends.org. Check back often, as new offers are posted weekly.

► Success stories

Special thanks to Bob Wayman of Unilever, who donated his \$3,000 first-place prize from *KC Magazine's* Buffalo Run Rally to the Independence, Mo. School District YouthFriends effort. This marks the second year Bob has donated his rally prize to YouthFriends.



YouthFriends®

Opening New Worlds for Kids Since 1995

Fall 2007 • Volume 12 • No. 2
News

1800 Baltimore, 4th Floor • Kansas City, MO 64108

Greater Kansas City

816.842.7082 • Toll Free 877.842.7082

YouthFriends Kansas

620.724.6281 • Toll Free 800.563.0472

youthfriends.org

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
KANSAS CITY, MO
PERMIT NO. 1601