

## MENTORING

**M**entoring programs can be of great benefit to Single Parent Scholarship Funds. They create a direct link between scholarship recipients and community volunteers. The support and encouragement offered by mentors further strengthens the self-confidence and emotional well being of students who often face more than their fair share of difficulties.

Simply put, a mentor is actively interested in a student's personal and academic success and encourages the student to reach his/her fullest potential. A mentor is a listener who calmly offers attention, care, and concern to the student. Although not a professional counselor, a mentor can be a "proactive" friend who is empathetic to the student's situation and may have suggestions for solving problems based upon his/her own life experiences.

Mentors represent an aspect of the Single Parent Scholarship Fund that does not involve money. The fact that one cares enough to participate in a mentoring program suggests that the community itself is a source of caring and comfort to those struggling with the everyday burdens of single parent life. Mentors provide a shoulder to lean on, a word of encouragement, or a listening ear when the single parent needs it most.

The following are suggested guidelines that affiliates should consult as they begin to establish their own mentoring program.

### **RECRUIT AN INDIVIDUAL TO SERVE AS THE MENTORING PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

Depending on the number of students who express an interest in having mentors, the responsibility of developing and implementing the mentoring program may require a good deal of coordination, communication, and training. If a board member or affiliate volunteer is willing to accept a leadership role in planning the project and maintaining it, his/her commitment would insure its success.

### **IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOURCES FOR VOLUNTEER MENTORS**

Members of your board of directors are a fertile source for mentoring volunteers. They are familiar with what you do, have participated in interviews with the students, and will want to maintain contact with students on a regular basis.

Donors may also be interested in becoming mentors, particularly those who may have been single parents or the children of single parents.

Another pool of possible mentors is former scholarship recipients who are now employed locally and understand exactly what present recipients are going through.

Beyond board members, donors, and students, there are many members of civic organizations, churches, and other volunteer groups who are frequently willing to offer their time and effort as mentors.

Retirees with a lifetime of professional experience are another particularly appropriate contact group.

One way to initiate contact with potential mentors is to write a letter either directly to the potential mentor or to the heads of local organizations explaining the mentoring program and inviting them to participate. The letter should be followed by a phone call further explaining the program, the benefits it provides to students, and the commitment you are asking the individual to make. Do not forget that some of the best representatives of Single Parent Scholarship Funds are the students themselves. Asking students to become involved in the recruitment process may be a very effective way of attracting volunteers!

An application for mentors used by the SPSF of Benton County can be seen on page 9-5. An adaptation of this application can be used to solicit information from prospective mentors, in preparation for selection.

### **TRAINING MENTORS**

It is critically important to the success of a mentoring program that volunteer mentors have a clear idea of what their volunteer position entails. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that a one-on-one orientation meeting between the volunteer coordinator or program director and the prospective mentor take place before he/she is selected. By getting to know each mentor and conveying to each the responsibilities of mentoring, the volunteer coordinator or program director will be able to better match him/her with a student. If such a meetings are difficult to arrange on an individual basis, group orientation can accomplish the same goal.

Orientation should inform mentors of the goals of mentoring and the responsibilities each mentor assumes when he/she volunteers. Specifically, the time commitment and the types of contacts expected should be clearly outlined. For those who have not served on an Affiliate board and who have had limited contact with single parent students, a description of the typical experiences of low-income single parent students may be very helpful. The presence of one or more single parents who can give first-hand accounts of their life experiences would allow mentors to ask questions of those they are offering to help.

Providing information on mentor responsibilities and expectations is important. Equally significant are the rewards that mentors receive from being volunteers: making a difference in the lives of others, broadening their own horizons, enriching their own lives as well as others', learning, and growing themselves.

### **MATCHING MENTORS WITH STUDENTS**

In evaluating the field of volunteers willing to be mentors and the students requesting mentors, common sense dictates that those with similar interests and experiences will most benefit from the mentoring relationship. A common ground for comfortable interaction is vital. Matching the career interest of the student with the professional experiences and skills of a mentor is the best of all possible combinations.

### **STRUCTURING THE MENTOR RELATIONSHIP**

It is highly recommended that the mentor and the student meet for the first time face to face/ This could be at a group gathering of all the mentors and students or a one-on-one setting. It is very important the two be introduced, get to know each other, and exchange contact informa-

tion. Following the initial meeting, it will be up to the two of them to further develop their relationship. Monthly contacts, at a minimum, are essential to the value of the relationship. The contacts should be made in a way that is helpful to the student and rewarding to the mentor.

Reporting by the mentors on their experiences is crucial to the improvement of the mentoring project as a whole. Likewise, feedback from the students will offer valuable insight from their perspective. The mentoring project coordinator should work with those involved to make reporting as easy as possible. A good reporting system will also prove helpful in future training.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON MENTORING**

There are several sources of information on mentoring available in Arkansas. Selena Ellis with the DHS Office of Volunteerism offers mentoring training. She can be reached in Little Rock at 800-682-7540, extension 27540. Jean Tinesley has been instrumental in developing the Benton County SPSF Mentoring Program and is most willing to offer advice and information to others throughout the state. She can be reached at (479)925-6253 or by writing to her at 8464 Par Lane, Rogers, AR 72756. Many thanks to Jean for providing the information used in this section!

# **SINGLE PARENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND OF BENTON COUNTY**

## **What is a mentor?**

A mentor is a person who is interested in your personal and academic success. A mentor is ready to listen and maybe help you on your path to a better life. A mentor has usually “been there” and may have some suggestions that you haven’t thought of yet.

## **What a mentor is not:**

A mentor cannot help you financially or be your professional counselor. However, a mentor can generally give you guidance for help in those areas.

## **Who can request a mentor?**

Any single parent scholarship recipient can request a mentor. The mentor committee will try to place you with a mentor that best matches your needs. If a mentor cannot be found, you will be placed on a waiting list for the earliest possible placement.

## **How can I apply?**

Complete the attached form and mail it to the address listed below.

Your Affiliate’s Mentoring Program Contact Person  
His/Her Address  
City, State, Zip  
His/Her Phone Number

**SINGLE PARENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND  
OF BENTON COUNTY, INC.**

**MENTOR APPLICATION**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Apt. #

\_\_\_\_\_ City State Zip

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

College Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Years: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_ Ages: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CHECK AREAS OF CONCERN FOR MENTOR:**

- ? Tutoring Area: \_\_\_\_\_
- ? Budgeting
- ? Food/Clothing Needs
- ? Housing
- ? Legal Aid
- ? Friend to Listen
- ? Other List: \_\_\_\_\_

**ON THE BACK OF THIS APPLICATION:**

Please write a short introduction about you and your family. Feel free to address any topics of discussion that you would like your mentor to know about. All applications are confidential and limited to access of the Benton County Single Parent Committee Board.

# **SINGLE PARENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND OF BENTON COUNTY- MENTORING PROGRAM GOALS**

**Purpose:** To let students know that ours is not just a scholarship of money, but also one of caring.

**Goal #1:** To have an assigned mentor for each student who requests one, as well as to see that all students feel mentored.

- We consider all board members, OHC personnel, and many community members and organizations to be mentors.
- We want to remove the feeling of isolation many students have because of the circumstances of their life at this time.

**Goal #2:** To match the career interest of the student with that of the mentor i.e., teacher/teacher, nurse/nurse, etc.

- To create a common ground for comfortable interaction.
- To help students grow into their new roles as members of the community.

**Goal #3:** To encourage mentors to stay with the same students until the students' goals are achieved.

- We attempt to place students with mentors in the same phone area to facilitate calling on the part of the student.
- We recommend that the mentor's first meeting with the student be face to face.
- We recommend that the mentor call the student every three or four weeks and encourage the student to stay in touch.
- Mentors are encouraged to use their own ideas in establishing a relationship with a student.

## **Sources of Mentors:**

- Volunteers who come forward after attending a benefit.
- People who hear our speakers.
- Media coverage, church bulletins, etc.
- Acquaintances or mentors.
- Graduates of our program.
- Board members.

## **Present Method of Orientation:**

- Lunch with new mentor to learn about background, career interests, and experiences.
- Discuss program and exchange ideas.
- Introduce materials.

## **Qualities and Experiences that Contribute to the Success of Mentors:**

- Many have been single parents themselves and have the desire and understanding to help other in the same situation.
- Many, by the nature of their own career, are already trained as mentors.
- Those in fields of higher education know how to advise and guide students.

- Small business owners are well grounded in qualities to be good role models.

**Current Mentors' Fields of Expertise:**

- Teachers, counselors, and social workers.
- Nurses and medical-related fields.
- Business and industry.
- Higher education and related fields.
- Finance.

**Current Number of Mentors: 67**

**Current Number of Students being Mentored: 57**

**For More Information on this Program call Jean Tinesley at (479)925-6253.**

## "MENTOR"

- M** A MENTOR must MOTIVATE you to set goals for your future then help you to MAINTAIN course toward reaching those goals.
- E** When life gets EXASPERATING, a mentor is someone who ENCOURAGES you ENDLESSLY.
- N** A mentor cannot offer financial help but can help NAVIGATE you through the NUISANCES of life by making you aware of programs that are available to meet your needs.
- T** A mentor is someone who TRULY TREASURES your accomplishments and TELLS you so. They are also someone you can TURN TO and TRUST with any concerns you might have.
- O** When life gets OVERWHELMING, (and when you are a single parent attending college it obviously will) a mentor is some one who is there to help you OVERCOME your fears of failure and see that the OBSTACLES in your way are really just OPPORTUNITIES for growth.
- R** Last, but not least, your RELATIONSHIP with your mentor is one of mutual RESPECT. RESPECT is something you both de serve. You — for what you are at tempting to accomplish. And your mentor — for being willing to help you do it.

By Kim Dzwonkiewicz  
Benton County SPSF Recipient 1997