

Mentoring Matters

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Editor's Note: This newsletter is designed to keep you informed about the program we refer to as the Governor's Mentoring Grant. This program at Johnson Primary, Lawrence Intermediate and Hohokam Middle Schools is being funded (in part) by the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families through a grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Title IV Program through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

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171 Attend 2nd Annual Mentor Recognition Dinner

On the evening of May 3 the Hohokam Middle School Cafeteria was nearly filled to capacity with mentors and their family members, mentees and their family members, school staff, members of the Partnership Team and invited guests. As guests arrived, they were treated to a slide show highlighting the fun activities of mentors and their mentees throughout the year. Guests were served an excellent dinner of enchiladas, rice, beans and chips by Little Mexico and found their places at brightly decorated tables with blue tablecloths and yellow and blue balloons. Dinner was topped off with chocolate or white cake decorated with the Mentoring Program logo. More than one mentee said that what he liked best about the night was the food!

Several mentees and their mentors entertained guests, showing their special relationships and individual skills and strengths. Kit Causey spoke on behalf of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe about the importance of the Mentoring Program. "This program provides an incredible resource. The Mentoring Program brings hope and communication in the midst of chaos for many families."

Dan Weisz, Jon Ben-Asher and John Michel spoke briefly about their support for the program, and distributed mentor awards. A total of 72 mentors were acknowledged, including three mentors participating at the Boys & Girls Club. Twenty-nine mentors earned one-year awards, and 12 earned two-year awards.

The highlight of the evening was mentees giving personally decorated framed certificates to their mentors. Some students read their messages out loud for the guests; some wanted to keep their messages private. The following sampling of messages indicates how the mentees feel about these special people in their lives.

"I love you."

“You are the best.”
“Thank you for being the best mentor ever.”
“Thank you for being my best friend.”
“You are a nice and cool mentor. Thank you for your help.”
“Thank you for being my friend and mentor.”

Quick Quotes from Dinner Guests

The Mentor Recognition Dinner gave us an opportunity to ask several important players what they think about the program as the school year comes to a close.

“This program is simple in concept, but huge in impact.”
Dan Weisz, Principal, Johnson Primary School

“It’s uplifting to see the mentors come in the door of the school. They are the best role model for some kids.”
Jon Ben-Asher, Principal, Lawrence Intermediate School

“We want more mentors. There are so many kids who would benefit.”
John Michel, Principal, Hohokam Middle School

“This is a good program. When I went to school we didn’t have anything like this, and it would have been good for me. We want our employees to be involved. We are stressing the importance of education and we want kids to be in school every day.”
David Ramirez, Mentor and Pascua Yaqui Tribal Council Member

Here’s what some of the mentees and mentors had to say about their experiences in the program when interviewed at the Mentor Recognition Dinner.

What’s the best part of having a mentor?

“It’s fun.”
“The fun.”
“Someone to talk to and have fun with.”

What do you most like to do with your mentor?

“Play games.”
“Teach her about the computer.”

As a mentor, what do you like best about this night?

“The awards and the interaction with everyone who’s here.”
“Seeing all the other mentors so we can recognize another friendly face when we’re at the school.”
“All the people. I didn’t realize how many mentors there are.”
“I like getting together with my mentee’s family.”
“The positive atmosphere, socializing with my mentee and his parents.”

What's the best part of having a mentee?

- “The satisfaction of knowing you can make a difference by just being there.”
- “Having a little friend.”
- “Getting to learn new things and learning about the younger generation.”

What do you tell your friends and family about being a mentor?

- “It's a big responsibility, but it's a special opportunity to be in someone's life. Once you get into the routine, it is worth it, very satisfying. You have to make the time to be here.”
- “It's an awesome and innovative program that addresses the missing areas of support for kids.”

Maintaining Your Connection: Summer and Start of School

- Six stamped postcards were provided to each mentor at the recent mentor meetings, or were available in the sign-in book for those who could not attend. Mentors were asked to help their mentees address these postcards to the mentors, so it's easy for the mentees to write to their mentors over the summer. Keeping in touch is so important. We hear how much kids love to get postcards from their mentors. Please remember to take a minute to write a quick note and **send a postcard to your mentee**. You can always remind them to send the postcards they addressed to you in your note!
- If they haven't already, encourage your mentees to join the PY Boys & Girls Club. It's free for kids, and you can get together with them at the clubhouse. You can **meet with your mentee over the summer at any supervised, site-based program** that he or she is a member of. Marie will let you know other programs where your mentee may be visited, or call Marie to check on any place that you would like to visit.
- The first day of school is Monday, August 15. You can **visit your mentee as soon as school starts**. You don't need to wait to hear from Marie to get back into your routine. In fact, the mentees would be very excited to see their mentors at school during that first week as they transition into their new grades. All you need to do is check in at the front office. The school staff will assist you in finding your mentee's classroom. The class and teacher information will be in the sign-in book as well. Just sign in and hook up with your mentee.

News from the Partnership Team

Lynette Sol and Bernice Rodriguez from the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Boys & Girls Club have joined the Partnership Team. Mentor Lydia Romero has also joined the Partnership Team. Welcome! We are pleased that Will Ponder will continue to serve on the Partnership Team as a representative of the Higher Education Department of the Tribe, and a new K-12 representative will be chosen. The University of Arizona will add another person to the evaluation team to keep up with the increased workload of gathering information on mentees in the program.

Partnership meeting times have been changed for next year to make it easier for school staff members to attend. The new day and time is Wednesday from 2-3 p.m. A detailed schedule is available from Marie.

Support from the Tribe continues to grow. There are now two council members actively mentoring. Chairwoman Frias will serve as a mentor, will put an article on the program in the PY Times, and is paving the way for StrengthBuilding Partners to recruit employees of Casino of the Sun. Chairwoman Frias also asked SBP to meet with Aleena Hernandez, the Director Education for the Tribe, and develop a formal contract for the program. Aleena Hernandez endorses the program, has agreed to assign a new representative of the Education Department to serve on the Partnership Team, and plans to accompany the new representative to the next meeting.

New mentors continually need to be recruited and trained to replace those that leave, primarily because of heavy work load. The current count of matched pairs is as follows: Lawrence, 40; Hohokam, 11; Johnson, 17. Male mentors are particularly needed to be matched with the majority of mentees (63%) who are male. Marie will be busy this summer recruiting and training as many mentors as possible, and Pat Trainor will be recruiting mentees.

Upcoming Events

- May 24 Last day of school

- June 16-17 Yoemia Nau Yahame Conference, Holiday Inn Palo Verde
StrengthBuilding Partners will make a presentation on the Mentoring Program at the schools and Boys & Girls Club, and have a booth

- August 15 First day of school

- September 7 Partnership Team Meeting at Lawrence at 2:00

Meet the Mentors

Irma Shackelford is a Social Worker II and Foster Care Home Coordinator for PY Social Services, and has served in that position since March of 2004. With a graduate degree in social work from Arizona State University, she has always worked in social services, primarily with children, and held several different positions in San Diego before moving to Tucson. Irma, one of seven siblings, is among the first generation in her family to be born in the United States. Her father was with the Mexican Consulate and Embassy and the family traveled everywhere. She is married, and has three grown children, in Phoenix, Oregon and Pennsylvania, and three grandchildren. She enjoys visiting her grandkids, traveling and collecting dolls.

Cecilia Cazares has been a Senior Buyer in the Purchasing Department at the Tribe since 2000. She enjoys her job, her co-workers and being in Tucson after having spent some time in California. When her boss encouraged her to mentor, Cecilia decided it was an opportunity to visit a child at school which she had not been able to do as much as she would have liked with her own son. Originally from Douglas, Cecilia and her family, including five brothers and two sisters, moved to Tucson in 1976. She graduated from Sunnyside High School and attended Pima Community College. When not at work, Cecilia is busy driving her 13-year-old son Edward to school and his baseball games.

Rhonda Ortiz is an In-school Counselor for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe at Johnson Primary. Previously a case manager with children and adolescents, she has worked for the Tribe for nearly seven years. She left her family in Yuma and moved to Tucson 14 years ago. Rhonda received her undergraduate degree in

psychology, and is currently working on her master's degree in social work from ASU. She has always enjoyed working with children, and previously had worked for the Arizona Children's Association. Rhonda decided to become a mentor two years ago because she feels she can provide the positive role model that children need. She says she could have used a mentor herself when she was growing up, and can relate to the kids in the program.

How You Can Help

Please continue to encourage your friends and co-workers to contact Marie Stickford at **404-6275** for more information or an application to become a mentor. Marie is also available to make a presentation or home visit to talk about how to become a mentor. Call Pat Trainor with mentee referrals at 481-5760.

We also welcome your submissions of stories about the mentor/mentee relationship and ideas for activities for publication in this newsletter. Please send your articles or comments to Marie at maries@strengthbuilding.org.