

Mentoring program resolves to get more volunteers

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

The Harvard Mentoring Project, MENTOR and the Corporation for National and Community Service joined forces in 2002 to establish National Mentoring Month, recognized in January of each year. The purpose of National Mentoring Month is to bring national attention to the thousands of youth throughout the country who are in need of positive role models.

Chanda Hurms, program manager for Inspiring Futures, a division of the YWCA's Youth Intervention Services which pairs at-risk youth with mentors, says that the need for mentors in this community is significant.

Sixty percent of the youth who participate in the Inspiring Futures program are referred by the juvenile justice system. Many are on the waiting list to receive mentors.

"What we're trying to do is provide ... mentors to males and females, to help dissuade them to not re-offend ... to give them positive, structured activities to do and to show them that there are things better that they can do with their time," Hurms explained. "These are kids who are in highly dysfunctional families, which lends even more to them being at risk."

Carol Sullivan, 49, became a mentor through Inspiring Futures two years ago. Sullivan was paired with 13-year-old Ayesha Crawford, whom she affectionately calls "Esha." She says the mentoring experience has been extremely rewarding for her.

"To look through Esha's eyes at different world problems, at her own family problems, at my family, it has reawakened a part of me that I had forgotten existed," Sullivan commented. "Seeing her smile, having her open up to me and ask me questions that she might not have asked anyone else — that's by far been the most

rewarding part." Sullivan admitted that the prospect of taking on a mentee who may have had a criminal background was a little daunting for her at first, but says things have worked out well for her and Crawford.

"I was a little leery at first. I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but she put me at ease very quickly," she remarked. "There is nothing I would have changed — absolutely nothing. She's a phenomenal child."

Over the years, the two have engaged in many activities together, from tubing on the Dan River, to hiking, volunteer work, even stained glass classes. Sullivan says that Crawford has become a part of her family.

"I have a daughter and son living at home; my son is 24 and my daughter is 22, and they've kind of adopted her as their little sister," she said. "She's pretty much a part of every holiday meal I have."

Sullivan, who works at Windstream Communications and does photography on the side, has incorporated Crawford into many aspects of her life, sharing the knowledge and passions that she possesses with the child.

"She learned how to cook in my kitchen for the first time. I've given her many lessons on using my camera. She's actually started her own portfolio," Sullivan said, "(but) as much as I may have taught her, I think she may have taught me more."

Although the program typically supports mentorships for up to two years only, Sullivan has already said that she plans to continue her relationship with Crawford.

"As long as she wants me in her life, I want to be there," she said. "She's lovely, she's really lovely."

Inspiring Futures, formerly known as Governor's One on One, is in desperate need of male mentors, Hurms says, as most of the referrals are male.



Program manager Chanda Hurms.

African-American youth who are at risk," she commented. "It'd be great if we could have some really positive black men step up. It doesn't matter as far as your income level or your education, as long as you have that ability to be positive."

Keith Kelly, District Liaison for Mel Watt, is one of the few men who have signed on to be mentor since Hurms took leadership of the program

two years ago. Jamon Carson, 16, was assigned to Kelly earlier this year.

"Because I talked about different things that we need to do in our own community I thought it was important that I give back myself," Kelly said of his motivation to become a mentor. "It's a lot easier for people to give dollars to charity when really what we need to



Ayesha Crawford

give is our time. The fact that you can be a positive role model to a young person and help shape them and mold them — those things are so invaluable."

Over the past six months,

Kelly and Carson have engaged in different activities, from attending football and basketball games, to simply sharing a meal and quiet conversation.

"He really doesn't have a male role model in his life, so I just try to talk to him about some of the different things that are going on," Kelly said. "I'm not really that old, but I'm 29, and I am far removed from the teenagers. It makes me feel like I understand more ... like I have more of a connection to youth, to the younger generation so to speak."

Males and females who are interested in mentoring may visit the YWCA Youth Intervention Services office, located at 214 N. Spring St. in Winston-Salem. Hurms says that anyone with a positive attitude is welcome and encouraged to come and make a difference in the life of a local youth.

"When we think back in our lives of who was it that was a positive influence, we can find somebody, whether they were officially a mentor or not," she said. "These kids need those positive influences, because they seem to be sorely lacking them."

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News Clips

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Private completes basic training

Army National Guard Pvt. Courtney R. Bowman has graduated from basic combat training at Fort Jackson, Columbia, S.C.

During the nine weeks of training, the soldier studied the Army mission, history, tradition and core values, physical fitness, and received instruction and practice in basic combat skills, military weapons, chemical warfare and bayonet training, drill and ceremony, marching, rifle marksmanship, armed and unarmed combat, map reading, field tactics, military courtesy, military justice system, basic first aid, foot marches, and field training exercises.

She is the daughter of Hazel Bowman of E. 23rd St., and goddaughter of Mellissa Thomas of Montrose Lane, both of Winston Salem.

The private is a 2006 graduate of R.J. Reynolds High School.

Lexington Deltas plan MLK breakfast

The Lexington Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will hold its 18th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast on Jan. 15 at the Lexington YMCA, located 119 West-Third Ave. in Lexington. The Memorial Breakfast will feature Reverend Dr. James L. E. Hunt as the guest speaker.

Hunt is the pastor of New Birth Worship Center in East Bend. He is the former pastor of Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church of Winston-Salem, St. John A.M.E. Zion Church of Thomasville, and Patterson Grove A.M.E. Zion Church of East Bend. A breakfast will be served beginning at 7:30 a.m. The sorority is happy to have been able to present a cadre of highly famed individuals through the years and this

year. Tickets (\$10 for adults and \$6 for students under 12) may be secured from any sorority member or contact Arlene L. Pinnix-Morrow at 336-249-0438 or Theresa Scott in Winston-Salem at 336-760-1454.

The Lexington Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta is a member of the national organization with a membership of more than 50,000 college trained members and more than 900 chapters nationwide. The goal of the sorority is to promote the growth and development of the community through eradicating educational, economic and social inequities.

BOE to hold special meetings

Eric Elliott, the chair of the local Board of Elections, has announced in the first half of 2007 the Board will take advantage of a lull in the four-year election cycle to hold a series of special meetings aimed at getting community input on how the BOE might improve its procedures.

These one hour meetings will be held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. The dates and topics will be: Jan. 9, BOE Budget; Feb. 13, Precincts and Procedures; March 13, Communications; April 10, Voter Registration and Absentee Voting; May 8, Poll Worker Recruitment and Training. The chair invites citizens to contact the Board of Elections Staff and Board Members with your suggestions and to join with us in our Tuesday deliberations as we seek to make the voting experience the best for all Forsyth County voters.

The Board Meetings will be held on the 2nd floor of the Forsyth County Government Center, 201 N. Chestnut Street, Winston-Salem, N.C.

If you have any questions regarding the Board Meetings, please contact the Board of Elections office at 336-703-2800.



Elliott