



THE MENTORING  
PARTNERSHIP OF  
SOUTHWESTERN  
PENNSYLVANIA

MAKE A CONNECTION. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

# MENTORING matters

winter 2010

## You Say You Want a Resolution, Well You Know ... We All Want to Change the World

Okay, it's not the exact lyrics of the Beatles tune but the word play has great meaning ... especially this time of year.

By the time you read this newsletter, there's a very good chance that you have blown through your 2010 edition of "it's-a-new-year-so-how-can-I-do-it-better?" concepts. But resolutions don't feature an expiration date. So if your overall improvement plan included "giving something back," mentoring may be the perfect way for you to change the world.

### Taking the First Step

If you ask folks who initially hesitated becoming a mentor what stopped them, many will say they were worried about doing a good job. The fear of failure can serve as a major roadblock. But those same cautious people will tell you that succeeding as a mentor just requires taking that first step and getting involved. The rest is easy. Offer guidance and encouragement. Support someone's dreams. Share your knowledge.

### Make A Connection. Make A Difference.

January is *National Mentoring Month* which means The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania — along with mentoring organizations across the U.S. — is celebrating and promoting the importance of mentoring and the positive effect it can have on the young lives of our region.

A fresh year, a fresh decade, a fresh start ... all wonderful reasons for you to join neighbors, local businesses and schools to increase the number of mentors and promise brighter futures for our kids.

Not sure where to start? The Mentoring Partnership is here to make volunteering easy. To find a program that fits your schedule and interests, call us at 412-281-2535. You can also check out the handy mentoring tool on our Website at [www.mentoringpittsburgh.org](http://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org).

JANUARY IS

NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH



1,500 young people in our  
region still need a mentor.



MAKE A CONNECTION. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

## MENTORING SPOTLIGHT

# Youth Futures Commission: Removing Violence and Improving Opportunities

Across the country, there are hundreds of cities striving for one common goal: a safe and sound environment for its young people. Though each region has different issues, providing safety and the possibility of a brighter future is a goal all cities share. The **Youth Futures Commission (YFC)** is a clearinghouse and think-tank group working to implement a strategic plan to reduce youth violence and increase meaningful opportunities for youth.

It was originally formed by a group of public and private sector leaders working as one to develop and implement a bold plan: prevent youth violence and increase meaningful opportunities for the youth of the Steel City. Although it has not always been active in its 15-year history, the last three years have seen renewed effort.

### Unified Front

The YFC's steering committee is comprised of top leaders in government, business, law enforcement, education, human services and religion to bring a broad perspective to this issue.

This committee partners with individual neighborhoods and those in the "trenches" that battle to give youth a voice on a daily basis through programs, services and public policy.

"These collaborative efforts create a unified front," explains Frederick W. Thieman, co-chair of YFC and president of The Buhl Foundation. "The combination of powerful institutions and grassroots leadership all focused on providing community-based solutions is giving our youth a positive path to follow."

The Youth Futures Commission (YFC) works to ensure that the Pittsburgh region is a place of opportunity for its young people, one where they can grow as part of a vibrant community.

YFC uses the following four strategies to meet their vision:

- 1. Prevention:** Teach young children self-control, how to deal with frustration, how to resolve conflicts peacefully and how to avoid risky situations.
- 2. Intervention:** Reach children at the first sign of serious problems before the frequency and seriousness of their offenses increase and others are harmed. Intervene in the streets where older youth are at risk of gun violence and engaging those kids in constructive activities that contribute to the well-being of the community.
- 3. Community Mobilization.** Engage and organize neighborhood leaders in concerted efforts to provide meaningful opportunity for youth.
- 4. Law Enforcement.** Collaborate with law enforcement entities to improve the response to violence and prevent additional activities.

### The Role of Mentoring

One key to the YFC plan succeeding is mentoring. The commission continues to identify ways to get mentoring programs to the youth who most need a relationship with a positive, caring adult. The **Be a 6th Grade Mentor** initiative ([www.bea6thgradementor.org/](http://www.bea6thgradementor.org/)) is just one example. It is currently being expanded to reach more children with more supportive activities, such as peer-to-peer mentoring and speakers who can serve as role models.



### The YFC Plan

YFC is able to implement its strategy by taking specific actions that make a difference and reliably increase positive behavior while reducing youth violence, including:

- Addressing challenges at the first sign, such as upon the first time a child is arrested or referred to the police.
- Reducing neighborhood rivalries to make communities safer for both the youth and innocent bystanders.
- Assisting local law enforcement in making their communities safer.
- Improving education opportunities for students.
- Expanding job-training opportunities for young people.

Determined and focused, the YFC is confident that Allegheny County can insure that it is among the safest communities in the country, not just statistically, but in every neighborhood so that all young people contribute to rather than detract from our local economy.

The name of this initiative was changed from Youth Crime Prevention Council to Youth Futures Commission in February 2009 in recognition that the focus of the organization has changed from preventing violence (a negative) to helping young people succeed.

"The new name has a more positive message around helping young people thrive rather than simply keeping them alive," explains Thieman.

## THE MAGIC OF MENTORING EXPERIENCE

On October 29, in the home of Pittsburgh's beloved Steelers and Pitt Panthers, approximately 1,300 fans honored a different group of hometown celebrities for their hard work, drive and spirit. The Magic of Mentoring — a biennial event hosted by The Mentoring Partnership — shone a much-deserved spotlight on some inspiring individuals who embody the value of mentoring: caring adults connecting with children.

Mistress of ceremonies, Sally Wiggin (WTAE-TV news anchor), along with guest presenters Don Jacobson (Mentoring Partnership's board chairman), Fred Theiman (presenter of the Theiman Award to the Burke Family) and Gregg Behr (the Magic of Mentoring event chairman) were on hand as the Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania presented Excellence in Mentoring awards to the following individuals and groups:

### Thieman Award

The Burke Family  
Charlie, Patsy, Steve, Gail & Chip



Excellence in Mentoring  
Awardees Sarah Antonette and August  
Gwen's Girls



Bill Bothe and Taylor  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of  
Greater Pittsburgh



Jeff & Wanda Harper and Matthew  
Holy Family Institute



Christina Royster and James & Malcolm  
CareBreak at the Watson Institute



Strong Women, Strong Girls



Excellence in Mentoring  
Legacy  
Award Erika Lauffer  
nominated by Anna Hollis and  
Derek Martin



Fifty corporations, organizations and individuals sponsored the event. Proceeds from the event and silent auction totaling \$402,962 will benefit local mentoring programs through the work of the Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Every child can benefit from a mentor. For us to be able to provide high-quality mentors means children have a better chance in school ... in their relationships ... in life!

— Don Jacobson



One to One  
The Mentoring  
Partnership of  
Southwestern  
Pennsylvania  
2934 Smallman Street  
Second Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15201

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Join us in reaching out to kids through mentoring.  
You can make a difference ... learn how.



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## The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern PA

### What We Do

- Help start mentoring programs
- Provide technical assistance to ongoing programs
- Assist in recruiting mentoring volunteers
- Train mentoring volunteers
- Bring together mentoring staff and volunteers

### What You Can Do

- Be a mentor
- Host a mentor recruitment presentation
- Offer financial support

Get involved today by contacting us at:

[www.mentoringpittsburgh.org](http://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org) | 412.281.2535

[info@mentoringpittsburgh.org](mailto:info@mentoringpittsburgh.org)

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