

# The Role Mentoring Plays in the Health of a Community

By Kristan Allen

Mentoring plays an important role in the lives of today's youth. In our region alone, there are 134 mentoring programs that serve more than 24,000 children, offering guidance and encouragement to help them achieve their goals. These programs offer a wide range of support, including career inspiration. When did you first realize you wanted a career in the healthcare field? For many area kids, this realization is coming at an earlier age thanks to a mentoring program offering information on careers in healthcare.

Health Rangers is a work-site mentoring program offered to middle school students in the Pittsburgh Public School system. It introduces 7th and 8th graders to the workplace and the wide range of jobs available in the healthcare industry by pairing each student with a mentor from Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

Kurt Stillwagon, Manager of Recruitment at Children's Hospital, has been volunteering with Health Rangers for three years and has seen first-hand how the program impacts students interested in healthcare careers. As part of the program, he spends every other Friday showing students the various aspects of his job.

"The program is a great opportunity to help get a young person to not only think about what they want to be when they grow up, but also to see how the choices



Kurt Stillwagon, Manager of Recruitment at Children's Hospital.

they make now impact what they want to be," Stillwagon says. "I really wish they had something like this when I was young!"

Students participating in the program gain hands-on experience shadowing everyone from administrators to nurses and doctors. This 360-degree experience allows students to become familiar with the wide range of careers available in a

hospital. "It is amazing to see the Health Rangers realize how many different people work at the hospital. Every year, I always hear 'I thought just doctors and nurses worked here,'" Stillwagon says. "Hopefully that will impact my job as manager of recruitment down the road when these kids start applying for positions."

But students aren't the only ones who benefit from being involved in Health Rangers. According to a national survey on mentoring in America, 96 percent of existing mentors would recommend mentoring to others.

"Mentoring can offer many benefits to mentors, as well as mentees," says Colleen Fedor, executive director of The Mentoring Partnership, a local organization that assists mentoring programs in understanding and following best practices. "Many volunteers enjoy the activities they share with their mentees and see it as a source of fun and stress relief."

Careers in healthcare can be stressful and Stillwagon agrees that his work with Health Rangers helps to take his mind off of work for a little while. In addition to the fun he has volunteering with Health Rangers, he says his biggest reward is the opportunity to see young people really start to think about their futures.

Mentoring is an easy way to give back to the community by sharing the passion you have for your career with others. It doesn't cost money and it doesn't require any special skills. Mentors simply need to be willing to help a young person by being a consistent, caring adult; someone who will help them solve problems, practice good communication and introduce them to new experiences and ideas.

The Health Rangers program runs from October through April and is held every other Friday at Children's Hospital from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Any hospital employee is eligible to participate and if consistent availability is an issue, a whole department can participate and students can rotate to different people throughout that department.

If you aren't an employee of Children's Hospital, but are interested in getting involved with a mentoring program in your area, please contact The Mentoring Partnership at 412-281-2535 or [info@mentoringpittsburgh.org](mailto:info@mentoringpittsburgh.org) for more information.

And for those of you interested in becoming involved with a mentoring program, consider Stillwagon's parting words of wisdom: "Do it! You will find it rewarding when the mentee comes back wanting you to show them more or telling you that they told their parents everything they learned when they were with you last." †

## We're The Right Choice for In-Home Health Care Services

Providing Peace of Mind for Nearly 70 Years



Our trusted healthcare professionals work closely with family and doctors to:

- Deliver Personalized Care
- Maximize Recovery and Comfort
- Maintain Dignity and Independence

Contact us today for a free consultation on your local home care options.

Licensed Home Health Care Agency providing medical and non-medical services.

Approved Area Agency on Aging Provider  
Most Insurances Accepted



Extended Family Care  
... Excellence in home care

[www.starmulticare.com](http://www.starmulticare.com)  
412-241-7292



## Forbes Avenue Suites

3401 Forbes Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15213

412-325-3900 • 877-335-3900

[www.forbesavesuites.net](http://www.forbesavesuites.net)



- Spacious, Luxury 1, 2 & 3 Bedroom Suites
- Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates
- In the Heart of Oakland, walk to Pitt & all major Universities and Hospitals, minutes to downtown
- Smoke free, fully equipped, parking, full amenities

Forbes Avenue Suites has been specifically designed to meet the needs of Hospital, University and Business visitors requiring an affordable deluxe short or long term stay facility. Forbes Avenue Suites is the perfect solution for those looking for more than just a hotel room.



Special Hospital, University and CORPORATE DISCOUNTS available.

20% DISCOUNT for family members of hospital patients.

