

## January is National Mentoring Month

National Mentoring Month was created by Mentor (2002) the national mentoring partnership in conjunction with Harvard University's, TH Chan School of Public Health. Mentoring (considered here as a positive relationship with an adult role model) was thought to be an important factor in assisting young persons to navigate life's challenges, leading to a pathway of positive choices, and more likely, a successful transition to young adulthood. In the early 1990's an estimated 300,000 young persons had a mentor and today more than 4.5 million do. This fifteen fold increase is noteworthy and a significant step forward.

A research report done for MENTOR utilizing US Census data identified an estimated 46 million young persons between the ages of 8 and 18. Of that cohort 24 million were classified as at risk for a variety of factors and 22 million as having no risk factors. The study projections indicate that 15 million from each group will have mentor leaving a total of 16 million who will not. The evidence from numerous studies clearly demonstrates the positive influence and effectiveness of mentoring relationships; consider these factors:

- Youth who meet regularly with mentors are 46% less likely than peers to start using drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking. (*Ventures study Big Brothers Big Sisters*)
- Young persons who have a mentor are 55% more likely to go to college
- Mentoring reduces teen pregnancy by 35%
- Mentoring relationships help decrease violent behavior by 52%
- Those who are mentored are 78% more likely to become volunteers as well
- A great majority of them are interested in becoming mentors themselves
- Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 81% more likely to participate regularly in sports or extracurricular activities than those who do not (*The Mentoring Effect, 2014*)
- A study showed that the strongest benefit from mentoring, and most consistent across risk groups, was a reduction in depressive symptoms — particularly noteworthy given that almost one in four youth reported worrisome levels of these symptoms at baseline (*The Role of Risk, 2013*)
- Mentoring promotes positive social attitudes and relationships
- Mentored youth tend to trust their parents more and communicate better with them (*The Role of Risk, 2013*)
- Mentors can also prepare their mentees for professional careers and assist with their workplace skills by:
  - Helping set career goals and how to take the needed steps to realize them
  - Using personal contacts to help young people network with industry professionals, find internships, and locate possible jobs
  - Introduce young people to resources and organizations not familiar to them
  - Help with seeking a job (preparation), interviewing for a job, and keeping a job

The number of ways mentoring can help a young person are as varied as the people involved.

Statistics also show that young people with longer mentoring relationships (> one year) report better outcomes in all of the previously highlighted areas than those that last (< one year)

Locally, Long Island Youth Mentoring (LIYM) is a mission to fatherless children which was established in 1981 and provides a broad range of one to one mentoring opportunities. Consider these perspectives from the mentor viewpoint. One local mom, a yoga instructor was assigned to a residential facility and has facilitated a weekly yoga class for the past four years with teenaged girls 15 to 18. One of her former students is now attending college in Florida and stays in touch regularly being sure to schedule a meet up anytime she returns to New York. Another LIYM volunteer, a retired teacher, met weekly with a 14 year old from a single mom home to help teach him the English language. Both of these mentors report enormous personal rewards and feel enriched and invested in the lives of the young people they serve.

Many of you may already serve as a mentor in a formal or informal capacity. Whether it is through a formal structured process or something more organic, remember you are making a major contribution to the development of a young person. For others wanting to do volunteer service in your local community mentoring may be just what you are looking for!

For more information on mentoring visit: <https://liyouthmentoring.com> or [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

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