

Mentor Link

Newsletter November 2009

A big welcome to all our new volunteers who have recently joined Mentor Link. We hope you enjoy your time with us.

It's time for another Newsletter from Mentorlink that's full of information to read.

Firstly, a very big thank you to all volunteers, Trustees and Staff for all their on-going support and hard work over the past few months.

Chief Executive writes.....

This year has been exceptionally busy for Mentor Link with six new schools requiring our service and a big thank you to all the staff for all your hard work and patience.

Mentor Link is still expanding and since our last Newsletter (June 2009), we are now mentoring in 12 schools. New schools include, Ridgeway Middle, Church Hill Middle, Birchensale Middle school, Bishop Perowne, St. Bede's Middle school and Gorse Hill.

We now have 200 volunteer mentors supporting 250 pupils per week.

Next year we are planning our first Annual Conference at Kings School in Worcester to include training sessions, presentations and workshops. A big Thank you to Julie Best for securing this prestigious location.

In 2010 there will be a new ISA registration required for all staff and volunteers working with young people. All new volunteers will have to apply for ISA registration via their CRB in July 2010 and then all volunteers and

staff in the following year. This will be a huge administrative task for our staff and limited resources.

We currently have a young graduate - Kathryn Parmenter, helping with administration at the bungalow two days a week. If you would like to help in any way please contact Del.

Thank you to Rob Young

Who has provided invaluable support and help with the new shop in Stourport.

Welcome to...

A very warm welcome for two new members of staff. Alison Davies is the new Appointments/Administrator who is working at Ipsley, Church Hill, and Birchensale, in Redditch, and Louise Knott-Brown has just joined us as the Appointments/Administrator at King Charles school.

Fundraising Events:

On Saturday 7th November Mentor Link once again held its second successful Charity Ball. This year the 100+ guests entered via the red carpet to the theme tune from James Bond and spent an evening at the Casino Royale. A successful charity auction was held, with a number of great 'lots' to bid including a VIP day out



at Old Trafford and a Spy Academy experience day.

We also held a successful prize draw and the main attraction being the fun casino tables to try your luck on. Local Band Zenzai provided the music this year, and had everyone strutting their stuff on the dance floor. There was also your chance to have your photo taken with an Aston Martin or pretending to be James Bond! Over **£1700** was raised for Mentor Link so a big thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the night so successful. We look forward to seeing even more of you enjoying yourselves next year!



Forthcoming Fundraising Events:

Our next fundraising events are a Mentor Link Stall at the Bewdley Lights Christmas Market. If anyone would like to help contact Jo on 01299 400616.

We are also holding our first event in Redditch, which is a Black Country Night. This will be held on the 13th February, 2010, at Ridgeway Middle School.

On the 27th March, 2010, we are having a Barn Dance, at Heightington Village Hall. Your chance to dance the evening away to a fab band. Tickets are £12, to include a ploughmans supper. Please contact Jo for more details.

Charity welcomes new Charity Shop Manager:



Nadia Jones – Manager of new charity shop

Mentor Link Services is about to open a new charity shop in the area and is looking for volunteers. The charity shop will have an electrical section where small items that have been PAT tested will be sold. Kevin McGreevy our qualified electrician will also be on site to offer PAT testing at competitive rates to small business' in the area. The new Manager Nadia Jones who has many years experience of running charity shops is now looking for volunteers to help sort, arrange, clean and sell the stock. If you would like to help please contact Del on 01299 400616 or email dell_mentorlink@talktalk.net or if you have any small electrical items that are in working order please contact our Head Office on 01299 400616 or email andrea.maddocks@btinternet.com

Company number 6534231

Feedback from Parents and Volunteers:



George Cochrane
Mentor Link volunteer – Redditch

I started over two years ago. It was time to put something back and re-engage with the world in a new way. As an accountant the contrast could not have been more stark. From the boardroom to classroom.

I have children and grandchildren so dealing with difficult boys was nothing new except previously it was in the role of a dad. Well I'll let you into a secret, there is not much difference. There are so many boys today living without a male role model. I have now mentored five boys. Each has been different and rewarding in his own way. Without breaching confidentiality I hope, here briefly is each of their stories:

M was my first. His dad had just left home and he felt he needed to be "man of the house" to his mum and sisters. His school work had deteriorated and he was troublesome in class. As he improved it transpired he was a talented young actor with a leading role in the school play. Mentoring sessions became rehearsals. I went to see him in his play where he performed well and has never looked back since.

D was a boy with many problems. He was being bullied and felt quite a social misfit in

the school. Seeing me was an escape from the playground where he could talk and talk. I listened and listened.

J has been my biggest challenge. He is an intelligent boy with a flair for maths but poor communication. He has been in fights and in trouble with the police. I introduced him to the game of rugby. He now plays second row for Redditch under thirteen's. He has been named man of the match twice and as his game improves so does his behaviour.

D has an eating disorder and can be disruptive in class. We had long discussions on how it might be handled including relaxation techniques. We became good friends and talked a lot about football. We were both sad when he moved on to another school.

T has cerebral palsy and is largely confined to a wheel chair. He is quite sanguine about his problems and loves to talk. Our latest topic is famous battles. We always end each session with a song.

To what degree I have been able to help these boys is hard to say. At the end of each session I always ask if they want to meet again. So far all have always said yes and claim to enjoy the meeting. I can ask for no more. To catch a glimpse of these lads' lives, to gain their friendship and trust and see into the workings of a modern school is my reward.

A few words from volunteer, Del Bell:

I started mentoring about three years ago for Mentor Link. I have mentored seven children, so far, and have, hopefully, helped them in some small way to feel more confident about tackling their challenges they face, both at school and, at times, at home. I have just finished mentoring a child who came to me with anger management issues. We saw each other weekly for several months, and during this time we discussed the reasons that caused him to become angry, and how best he could manage these outbursts. Every so often the teachers review pupils who

are mentored, and here are some of the comments made about my mentee. “ Massive improvements in all areas. Calmer and more settled, and working much harder”. I was thrilled for him when I read the review, because I feel that this means he has worked hard to improve his behaviour at school, thus make his academic life much happier.

From a parent at Bewdley school:

We are extremely grateful to Mentor Link for supporting our daughter through a very difficult and unhappy time at school. Mentor Link’s independence has been its main strength: not only is our daughter able to discuss the problems she has with school in complete confidence, but she can discuss issues she would rather not share with us either. The Mentor herself has been approachable, friendly and reliable and the advice is structured, practical and encouraging. Mentor Link has helped our daughter to regain confidence and a positive attitude to school life. Thank you again.

A letter from a former volunteer:

Hi Andrea,

First of all, how are you!?! My Nan sent me an article that was in the Kidderminster Shuttle about Mentorlink and how they have now been recognised by the National Mentoring and Befriending organisation so well done!!!!!!

The reason for my email is that i wanted to say a HUGE thank you to you personally and to Mentorlink as a charity. I have recently completed my NVQ Level 3 in Mentoring and now volunteer as a mentor for The Children's Society mentoring children that run away from care. (I would have volunteered again for Mentorlink but now i live in Solihull so i needed something closer to home!! :) As a result of my experience with Mentorlink, i now have a new job for September. I'll be working at Smithswood Sports College in North Solihull as their Key Stage 5 Mentor for their new Sixth Form that is opening in September. I just wanted to say thank you so much

for having me as a volunteer, without Mentorlink I wouldn't be doing a job that I absolutely love!!!!

Hope you are well

Hayley

Information for all Volunteers from Claire Quinn our Volunteer/Recruiter...

SUPPORT



The last contribution I made to a Mentor Link newsletter was “Best Practice for Volunteers” which I hope you found of some use. When I was asked if I'd like to contribute something to this latest edition, I said “Yes” as I wanted to write something about support. It is the aim of myself and my colleagues to support all volunteers in their roles as mentors and we need to know from you how best we can do this. I am conscious we all work part-time and cannot be there at the start and finish of every appointment, that does not mean to say you cannot contact myself or your appointment administrator via telephone, email or the communication book. If you have anything you need to feedback to us, please do so. This can be anything from not turning up, to not opening up, a concern about your mentee, finding something out, clarifying something they've shared, off-loading / de-briefing, whatever it might be..... please let us know.

I am, as ever in awe of anyone who volunteers in this busy world we live in. Please know that you are appreciated. Thank you for taking time out of your day to support a young person. Mentoring brings with it challenges, with a few frustrations

thrown in for good measure, you are not alone,
share these with us..... we can help!



100 Club:

The first lottery draw took place in May, and is running very successfully. The draw is held every fourth Friday and costs £4 per month with the winner receiving a cheque for £50. If you would like more information on joining please contact Jo or Del on 01299 400616.

Easyfundraising/Easy search:

Please see the attached sheet

for an easy way to raise funds for us if you use the internet for shopping. For more information contact Zoe on 01299 400616

Safeguarding

As part of our Safeguarding policy please see attached new policy on Managing Allegations. Please be assured that this is part of our ongoing aim to provide a professional service to young people rather than in response to any specific allegations. If during mentoring you become concerned in any way about the welfare of your mentee please contact our staff or myself.

Contacts

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