

**ATTRACTING AND CONNECTING VOLUNTEERS:  
MENTOR RECRUITMENT  
Summary of Best Practices**

**Overview of Online Forum**

**Forum Date:** May 19 – 22, 2003

**Overview:**



Check out MENTOR's Online Community for tips and tools from others in the field

This ongoing forum shares resources and best practices for recruiting mentors from the general public and the business sector for school- and community-based programs. Discussions focus on key components of recruitment campaigns, including: identifying target audiences; developing recruitment language to use in campaign materials and presentations; and marketing and advertising for mentors. Additional discussions focus on best practices for recruiting male mentors and on best practices garnered from a variety of recruitment campaigns.

**Topics & Speakers:**

Mentor Recruitment for School-based Programs  
Melissa Gingell, Director, Recruitment Services  
YouthFriends

Marketing Recruitment Efforts to Men  
Joshua Smith, Operations Manager  
Granite State Youth Mentors

Wholesale Mentor Recruitment in the Corporate Sector  
Joellen Gonder-Spacek,  
Vice President of Business Development  
Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota

Mentor Get Mentor: A Pilot Mentor Recruitment Program  
John Hershey, Director of Programs  
Mentoring Partnership of Long Island

**URL for Forum:** [www.mentoring.org/community.adp](http://www.mentoring.org/community.adp)

**Volume 1, Issue 1  
Recruitment Forum**

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**MENTOR is leading the movement to connect America's young people with caring adult mentors.**

## **Mentor Recruitment for School-based Programs: Planning for Recruitment**

### **Discussion Leader: Melissa Gingell**

Recruiting volunteers, like marketing a product or service, requires a comprehensive plan.

- Set realistic goals that support the mission of the school district and your program. For instance, the school district should decide what percentage of students would have mentors during the school year. This is very important, because the school district will need to ensure it has adequate staff to serve as a liaison and contact point for mentors when they have questions or encounter difficulties.
- Identify the number of recruitment presentations to be made during the year and to whom – civic groups, faith organizations, senior citizen/retiree groups, school district employees, public service agencies, etc. Document your presentation goals and track your progress.

#### **Responses from Group:**

- Look for listings of various group meetings in your local newspaper. Target groups include: women's entrepreneur groups, women lawyers, young lawyers groups, breakfast clubs, networking clubs, Chamber of Commerce networking events, etc.
- One participant presented at a Human Resource Management Association luncheon and still gets calls from folks who kept the information and called when they decided to investigate becoming a mentor.
- In rural areas, a monthly morning roundtable at a café works. It's important that people hear your organization's name over and over again and associate it with what your program does, so make sure your message is clear.
- Presentations can be from five minutes to half an hour. Consider 15 minutes of presentation with time for questions. Many of the folks at your presentation belong to other organizations and are involved in many other activities. Let them know that you consider them community leaders and need their help in promoting mentoring.
- Provide a different spin on the benefits of mentoring -- focus on the benefits to the volunteer.

## **Mentor Recruitment for School-based Programs: Know Your Volunteers**

### **Discussion Leader: Melissa Gingell**

An advertising agency assisted YouthFriends with market research, including demographic surveys on YouthFriends volunteers.

- 74% of volunteers attend movies, so YouthFriends partnered with AMC Theatres to place a "slide" about YouthFriends on screen in local theatres. AMC donated the movie slides in exchange for placing AMC's name as a sponsor on newspaper inserts that went out during YouthFriends Week.
- 76% of volunteers indicated they dine out, so YouthFriends partnered with local McDonald's franchises and small area restaurants to place tray liners advertising YouthFriends.
- In 2003, the tray liners were supplemented with more affordable table tents.
- 81% of volunteers are members of religious congregations, so YouthFriends placed articles and ads in faith community publications.

#### **Marketing Ideas from Group:**

- Approach Starbucks about sponsoring table tents at their cafés.
- Inquire about indoor advertising (includes restaurant restrooms, sports arenas, etc.). The Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota sent a simple "cold call" letter to companies telling them about National Mentoring Month (NMM) and what they hoped to accomplish. The cold call letter generated over \$40,000 in donated ad space throughout the community over two years. During National Mentoring Month (NMM), held in January, commercial advertising often is slow (television, radio, print, etc.), so media outlets are better able to consider requests from nonprofits, such as mentoring organizations.
- Use the local cable channel to "advertise" volunteer opportunities. For example, consider producing a quarterly program, hosted by a school superintendent that features information on volunteering in schools.

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## Mentor Recruitment for School-based Programs: Know Your Volunteers (Continued from page 2)

### Discussion Leader: Melissa Gingell

#### Marketing Ideas in Rural Areas:

- Use a direct ask or group presentation; it is often most effective. For best results, supplement the presentation with TV commercials, radio spots and brochures.
- Talk with editors about running feature stories about mentors in local newspapers.

### Characteristics of Mentors

#### MENTOR conducted a poll with AOL/Time Warner on the *Power of Mentoring*:

formal mentors tend to:

- Be ages 18-44;
- Have household incomes \$25k or higher;
- Be employed full or part time;
- Have some college education or more; and
- Be equal numbers of whites and non-whites.

The research also found that, people who mentor at their workplace or school-based programs or non-profit programs tend to be younger than those people who mentor through religious activities.

#### YouthFriends Demographics

According to the 2002 Demographic/Lifestyle Characteristics of YouthFriends volunteers:

- 55% have a college or post-graduate degree;
- 51% are two income families;
- 79% vote in federal, state or local elections;
- 81% are members of religious congregations;
- 57% volunteer actively in other organizations;
- 60% selected a school that was close to home or work;
- 66% have no children in the home;
- 48% have annual household incomes between \$40,000 and \$100,000; and
- 76% are female.

## Mentor Recruitment for School-based Programs: Tools for Recruitment

### Discussion Leader: Melissa Gingell

#### Recruitment Tools from YouthFriends:

- **Employer Partner Notebooks** — an A to Z guide for businesses that want to encourage employees to become YouthFriends. Since 2000, the percentage of volunteers who heard about YouthFriends at work has grown from 13.5% in 2000 to 23.5% in 2002.
- **Pre-written recruitment speeches** — prepared speeches distributed to school districts, with alternate speaking points for different groups (college students, senior citizens, etc.)
- **YouthFriends recruitment video** — a four-minute video with a powerful message — *YouthFriends is Fun, Flexible and Making a Difference!*
- **Employer Partner Quarterly Reports** — reports compiled from the YouthFriends database that are sent to employers and that list: employee-volunteer names; number of hours volunteered; activities the employee volunteers participated in; and how many school districts, schools and children have benefited from those activities.

#### Resources from Group:

- The National Mentoring Center: Module 1: Targeted Mentor Recruiting  
<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/curriculum.html>
- Technical Assistance Packet #3: Recruiting Mentors: a Guide to Finding Volunteers to Work With Youth  
<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/packets.html>
- Texas Governor's Mentoring Initiative developed a "Promo Kit" for mentoring programs for NMM, which can be used anytime to recruit mentors. The kit can be customized with an organization's name and logo and includes: NMM Overview; PR strategies; draft press release; draft radio/TV PSA script; GMI Guide to Mentoring Resources, etc. Download a copy at: [http://www.txserve.org/txcvcs/mentoring/NMM\\_03\\_resources.html](http://www.txserve.org/txcvcs/mentoring/NMM_03_resources.html)

## **Mentor Recruitment for School-based Programs: Barriers to Recruitment**

### **Discussion Leader: Melissa Gingell**

- YouthFriends found that corporations want to do business with agencies that are professional and accountable.
- Senior citizens want to feel safe when they volunteer, so all activities are on school grounds during school hours.
- College students want flexibility.
- Each volunteer becomes a recruiter for YouthFriends. Hearing about YouthFriends from a friend is the number one reason new volunteers say they become mentors. Therefore, YouthFriends started the *Be A Friend, Bring a Friend* recruitment strategy where volunteers are encouraged to bring one friend to a session with their YouthFriend.

#### **Group Responses:**

##### **Recruiting in Rural Communities:**

- One participant actively recruits with newspaper articles, advertisements at fairs, business presentations, radio announcements and presentations to high school classes and clubs, such as the Key Club.

##### **Success in Rural Areas through YouthFriends Corps:**

- YF Corps are high school junior and senior volunteers who are trained to mentor/tutor younger elementary school children. Volunteers report they never would have thought about volunteering and are now considering being a traditional YouthFriend upon graduation.

##### **Barrier in Urban Area Programs:**

- In urban areas, one barrier to recruiting mentors is that potential volunteers either lack motivation or are not available as a result of hard economic and unsafe times. People are busy trying to take care of their own families and feel it is difficult for them to volunteer or even think of volunteering.

##### **Ideas to Address Barriers:**

- E-mentoring gets people involved. E-mentors get to know the kids and quite often end up "finding" the time to volunteer on site. School districts have had great success with matching busy corporate volunteers as e-mentors with students.
- Mentoring programs can work with local schools to incorporate a community service curriculum into social studies or other subjects. A number of schools and local governments have been interested in building a greater community service culture and some school districts require community service hours for graduation.

##### **Recruit College Students:**

- In working with college students, it is best to be flexible about their time and to recruit an energetic coordinator. Target human service, social work and psychology classes for presentations on mentoring. Encourage college students to get permission to use the time they spend in mentor training and mentoring a child to serve as a practicum or internship, or to earn civic engagement credits.
- One participant reported that their mentoring program requires college students to commit to mentoring for one hour a week for a year. Since college students attend school for eight months of the year and have down times, such as winter break, spring break and summer, the program requests that the students maintain contact with their youth by writing letters, calling and/or e-mailing during those breaks. Over the summer, the program sponsors a picnic, so that these college mentors see their mentees at least once during the summer.

## Marketing Recruitment Efforts to Men: Recruiting MENTors for Your Program

### Discussion Leader: Joshua Smith

**“MENTor of the Month” Campaign:** This campaign, developed for New Hampshire, is a statewide recruitment tool with local flavor that has led to the recruitment of 10-15 new male mentors per month who would not otherwise volunteer. In New Hampshire, it's all about local interest. With one statewide newspaper and one network affiliate, everything in the media must have a local spin to gain attention and be published!

- Granite State Youth Mentors contracted out to interview men who have been serving as mentors for local programs. We selected one mentor each month and sent media releases to local media outlets telling how that individual found time to mentor.
- The releases also included a listing of local mentoring programs and our toll-free statewide mentoring hotline number.
- Future plans are to provide each “Mentor of the Month” a stipend to cover costs associated with speaking to local business and civic groups about mentoring.

#### Steps to Design a Marketing Campaign for Male Mentors:

1. Identify the geographic areas you wish to target, and which media outlets and civic groups you want to approach.
2. Select a local male mentor who has been serving with your program for at least one year and who can tell a good story with colorful quotes. It's helpful to select a mentor from a large corporation; that way the story will receive extra coverage in the company newsletter and you may be able to hold a recruitment drive at that business.
3. Have someone familiar with mentoring conduct the interview (not program staff) to get interesting responses and ask the types of questions potential mentors would be interested in learning about.
4. Send out the media release early in the month, along with a photo of the mentor. Also, post it on your organization's Web site, local newsletters, etc.

#### Online Resource:

- **Recruiting Male Volunteers: A Guide Based on Exploratory Research:**  
<http://www.energizeinc.com/download/blackman.pdf>

#### Group Responses:

##### Board Assistance:

- Ask a male from your advisory board to help with recruitment presentations and to refer potential volunteers.
- Most board members of a mentoring program join because they are passionate about the cause and, therefore, make excellent speakers in meetings with their peers. If they head a local business, ask them to speak with other business leaders at a Chamber of Commerce meeting. Getting another business leader to recruit within his/her own business is powerful.
- Ask male mentors in your program to help with recruitment presentations.

#### Miscellaneous:

- Hold presentations at which current and former volunteers share their experiences as mentors in your program and answer questions.
- Use veteran mentors to recruit. Ask each one to make a few calls a week from home or work, at their convenience. Have them call prospective mentors who are “on the fence.” Give the callers a script to follow.
- Require prospective female mentors to give an application to at least one male friend before they are accepted into the program.
- Use women to recruit the men in their lives.
- Ensure your marketing materials and training sessions explain your screening and background-check process and why that process is needed to ensure the safety of both the volunteer and child.

#### Cross-Gender Matching:

- Research shows that matching the same gender and race offers distinct benefits but that random matching is also very successful. Each program needs to set a policy that best meets that program's goals and ensures successful mentoring. Dr. Susan Weinberger mentions that many school-based programs match the opposite sex in the early years because more women than men tend to mentor younger children, leaving little choice in finding same-sex mentors for young males. But in the upper grades, same-sex matches seem to be the most preferable.

#### Couple Matches:

- Find couples to mentor together. Ask prospective mentors if they think their partners would be interested in joining them as mentors. Advantages include being able to match the couple with a male student who gets the benefit of mentoring from both genders. In addition, many couples end up mentoring both a boy and girl.

## Wholesale Mentor Recruitment in the Corporate Sector: Why Minnesota Companies Support Mentoring

### Discussion Leader: Joellen Gonder-Spacek

The Minnesota Business Partnership (MBP) recognizes that mentoring is a great return on investment in preparing the future workforce. CEO's of 100 of Minnesota's largest companies also recognize that employees in their companies are an invaluable resource as potential mentors. Not only do young people receive the benefits of mentoring, but employees, companies and the broader community benefit, because kids who don't succeed in school and in life end up costing individual tax payers and companies thousands of dollars a year.

#### MBP Goals in Getting Corporate Support:

1. Get CEO's to endorse mentoring as a company priority and allow access to workplaces to mobilize employees.
2. Get more employees from large companies involved in mentoring kids.
3. Help kids achieve academically and graduate from high school.
4. Evaluate the impact of MBP company involvement in mentoring more youth.

## Wholesale Mentor Recruitment in the Corporate Sector: How to Collaborate with the Business Community

### Discussion Leader: Joellen Gonder-Spacek

#### Tips to Collaborate with the Business Community:

1. Have a champion (a business leader, for example) deliver the message about the value of mentoring and need for mentors to their peers.
2. Mentoring programs and partnerships need to get companies excited about supporting mentoring efforts and agreeing to provide financial support and help link employees with quality mentoring experiences. Before beginning recruitment efforts, be sure you can connect interested employees with kids who need and want mentors.
3. Use leverage... work with local Chambers of Commerce or other business groups to mobilize the community around mentoring. You save time and resources by connecting with a group of businesses rather than one individual or business at a time.
4. Put together a group of advisors to develop strategies for mobilizing the business community; use those advisors as part of a sales team.
5. Put together a plan for communicating to the business community about your program success stories and for business leaders to tell their own success stories. (Check out <http://www.mentoringworks.org/> under "News and Events" for an article written by a local CEO on the value of mentoring.)
6. Conduct an annual survey/other type of evaluation to show the achievements of your program.
7. Stay in touch with businesses to provide support to help replenish employee mentors.
8. Be strategic and make sure your request for mentors is manageable.

#### Ideas from the Group:

##### *Top Ten Tips for Managing a Successful Corporate Mentoring Program* by Myra Schomburg, Mentoring Program Coordinator, 3M:

1. Volunteer yourself. Never ask someone to do something you are not willing to do yourself.
  2. Observe the quiet, steady improvement of each mentor and mentee relationship.
  3. Thank your mentors multiple times throughout the school year.
  4. Recruit new mentors at every opportunity.
  5. Ask volunteers for ideas to improve the program and activities.
  6. Build team spirit among your mentors.
  7. Listen to the concerns of your mentors.
  8. Recognize the special "extra mile" efforts by your mentors.
  9. Communicate constantly with management, your school contact and mentors.
  10. Lead your group to new and higher levels of service to improve the school whenever and however possible.
- Check out <http://www.txserve.org/txcvcs/mentor/bestpractices.html> for features on 3M, IBM, State Farm and other corporate mentoring programs.

## Mentor Get Mentor: A Pilot Mentor Recruitment Program: Mentor Get Mentor Campaign

**Discussion Leader: John Hershey**

Mentor Get Mentor (MGM) is a tool designed to provide incentives to mentoring programs in recruiting new mentors. The tool was devised using time-tested customer acquisition techniques from the corporate world. We know these programs as “customer get customer.” It is based on the theory that happy, fulfilled volunteer mentors will bring friends, relatives and fellow workers into our community of mentors, if properly trained and motivated.

(E-mail John Hershey at [jhershey@mentorkids.org](mailto:jhershey@mentorkids.org) for a copy of the case study.)

Results from a 2002 National Mentoring Poll sponsored by AOL Time Warner Foundation on behalf of MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, were pertinent to the MGM recruitment program:

- 42% of those who do not mentor would seriously consider mentoring;
- 99% of mentors in formal mentoring relationships would recommend mentoring to others; and
- 59% of all mentors started as a result of being asked; about two-thirds were asked by a family member or friend.

*59% of all mentors started as a result of being asked. About two-thirds of this group was asked by a family member or friend.*

MGM involved:

- A recruiting contest that offered incentives for existing mentors to recruit new mentors for their programs;
- Cash-based awards, with significant prizes for those who recruited the most new mentors; and
- Competitions that pitted mentors against other mentors, program coordinators against other program coordinators and mentoring programs against each other.

For MGM to work, we needed:

- **New Literature.** This was key. We developed new literature and language to make mentors more comfortable engaging in recruitment activities that used sales language and techniques.
- **Competition.** We knew the key to success was getting existing mentors in front of potential mentors and having them deliver a “sales pitch,” using established techniques of sales-driven organizations. We encouraged good coaching and sales management by program coordinators and used financial incentives to reward success.
- **Rewards.** Because of the competitive nature of the program, the more an individual successfully recruited other mentors, the better one’s chance of getting an award. We selected awards that would benefit individual mentors and coordinators, as well as the kids in the mentoring programs. Ultimately, the key to our success was the competition and the fun we created, not necessarily the type of awards we offered.

MGM achieved a **97% growth rate** in participating programs. The pilot was successful beyond our original program goals and we will expand it next year.

## Mentor Get Mentor: A Pilot Mentor Recruitment Program: The Language of Successful Recruiting

### Discussion Leader: John Hershey

- Often, it is awkward to engage others in a discussion about “service.” People tend to assume that they will contribute in their own way if they find a cause they believe in. There is some truth to this; some people do tend to volunteer on their own. But a primary ingredient for success in any venture that depends on volunteers is to “ask for the business” – ask people to volunteer. Incentives are one way to influence behavior and encourage people to volunteer. But incentives alone do not ensure a successful recruitment campaign.

*A primary ingredient for success in any venture that depends on volunteers is to “ask for the business” – ask people to volunteer.*

The MGM literature equipped mentors with a “recruitment vocabulary” and addressed potential volunteers’ traditional concerns using softer language.

1. We talked about kids, not “at risk” youth.
2. We emphasized reconnecting with school communities.
3. We downplayed “one on one mentoring” and emphasized the “community of mentors.” We talked about a manageable commitment.
4. We talked not about “saving souls,” rather about “taking small steps and celebrating small victories together.”
5. We talked about having fun.

#### Responses from Group:

- For mentors, “saving souls” is a daunting challenge and unrealistic, so using such language is counterproductive. Conversations with mentors need to bring them back to reality. Help them see the influence they are having and let them believe that their influence can start a ripple effect over time. If mentors need to see themselves as a savior, they are in for a let down.
- Make sure that mentors understand their job is to be a friend, not to save souls or to be a counselor. Mentors need to show kids that they have choices in how they live their lives.
- Use recruitment language that welcomes and disarms rather than intimidates or scares off. Most people say no to requests that would impose on their free time.
- Emphasize that time commitments are flexible and “ask” for a specific amount of time, such as one hour per week. Also, emphasize “consistent” contact, stating that some weeks, a mentor need only talk with the child for 15 minutes by phone or exchange a few e-mails. Another week, they may want to spend a half a day going fishing or biking, etc. Encourage mentors to include their mentees in activities with the mentors’ families, where appropriate. That way mentors do not have to take time away from their own families.
- Assure potential mentors they will have a “community of mentors” to share experiences with through mentor meetings or trainings on specific subjects. Encourage prospective mentors to attend such events to meet other mentors and mentees before making a commitment.
- Use language that imparts a note of promise and hope but does not trick prospective mentors into thinking mentoring will be easier than it really is. Refer to kids as “youth of promise.” Use language that puts a positive spin on the accomplishments children have made in spite of the difficulties they face.
- Provide “leave-behind” materials. Teach mentors the language of recruitment if you want them to help recruit others. Once you have talked with a mentor willing to recruit, leave behind a brochure that reinforces the language you want them to use. It will make them more comfortable about asking others to mentor.

#### REMINDERS



- **Share these best practices with other mentoring programs and participate in the Online Community.**
- **When sharing or reprinting the information with others, please refer to MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership’s Reprint Policy at: [www.mentoring.org/about\\_us/reprint\\_policy.adp](http://www.mentoring.org/about_us/reprint_policy.adp)**
- **Registration for the Online Community Forums are free and open to all in the mentoring community.**
- **Go to [www.mentoring.org/community.adp](http://www.mentoring.org/community.adp) for more information.**