



AARP Connections

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 **Visit AARP Connections
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► FROM A GUEST

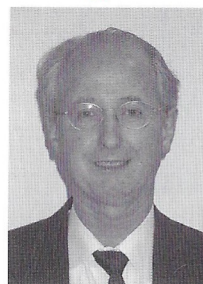
Lives Can Be Changed

What will it take for every child born into poverty in America in 2003 to be in a job at age 25? A 25-year commitment from concerned, caring adults.

Older Americans can be part of this commitment by becoming tutors and mentors and by supporting programs that provide these services. I know this can happen. Since 1975 I've led a tutor/mentor program in Chicago that connects adult volunteers with inner-city children and I've seen lives changed.

Effective tutoring/mentoring programs must be part of an organized strategy. Right now, the biggest obstacle we face is lack of programs. Yet existing programs also need a consistent flow of resources — funding, volunteers, technology.

I believe we can begin addressing these shortages. The Internet is a superb tool for matching volunteers and donors with tutor/mentor programs. It also offers a rich repository of technical information and knowledge that can be used as a starting point for



Daniel F. Bassill

new programs or to improve existing ones.

As an entry point, let me direct you to **www.tutormentorexchange.net**. It's our site for encouraging people to get involved with children in Chicago. It maps the city's areas of poverty,

shows where programs currently exist, stores helpful information for volunteers and volunteer leaders, and offers giving opportunities for those with more money than time. There is also a stimulating discussion of the challenges of working with impoverished youth.

Anyone can use this information. Any city can duplicate this process. You are particularly welcome in our online discussions.

New opportunities to serve children are becoming available through AARP's partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters and other tutor/mentor programs being piloted in different states.

Please join us in this battle.

Daniel F. Bassill is an AARP member and president of Cabrini Connections, a nonprofit organization in Chicago, and of the Tutor/Mentor Connection, a Web site providing online support.