

CBA Lawyers Mentor City's Youth

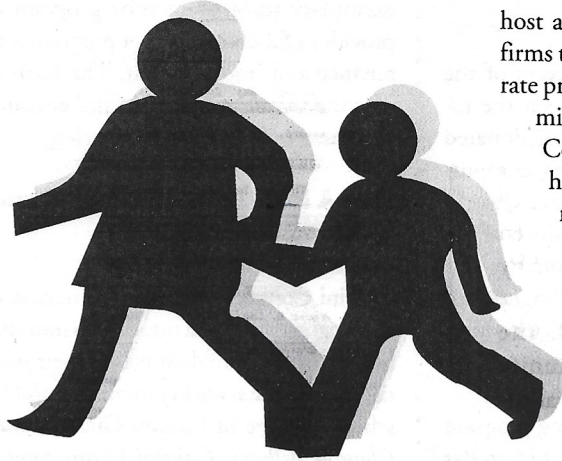
By Linda M. Rio

One-on-one mentoring between adults and disadvantaged youths provides critical support for the success of at-risk young people. The Chicago Bar Association, including the Young Lawyers Section and the Chicago Bar Foundation, have a long-standing commitment to strengthening and supporting families. A natural outgrowth of that commitment has been a multi-faceted program to support mentor and tutor programs.

Mentor/Tutor Program Brokering

Chicago has over 200 programs delivering various kinds of mentoring to inner city children. All of these programs need additional adults willing to devote their time and energy as mentors or tutors. For over a year, the CBA and CBF have assisted the Tutor/Mentor Connection, Chicago's clearinghouse for mentor and tutor programs in recruiting volunteers and new sources of funding. (See description of some programs at the end of this article.) Along the way, we have gathered and shared information on the strengths and weaknesses of tutor/mentor programs, so that other programs may learn from those that have succeeded.

Over 400 people have contacted us for referrals to neighborhood programs or to volunteer for our own "in-house" projects.



How You Can Become A Mentor, Too...

For each in-house project, training is created to better equip adults to serve as mentors. In 1993 the CBF trained 56 persons to be mentors in the Juvenile Court One-on-One Program and other mentor programs; since then, the CBA, CBF and YLS have trained almost 100 persons to serve as tutors for our in-house programs.

Now the CBA and CBF are about to link the legal community to mentor and tutor programs in yet another way. Entitled the "Law Bridges" program, we will recruit and train 25 legal teams of lawyers, legal assistants, legal secretaries and other legal staff to attend 25 existing mentor or tutor programs on a monthly basis. The legal teams will engage in discussions with the youth in these programs about law-related careers and legal issues of importance to the youth. We hope to include teams from all aspects of the legal community, including private practice, legal services, the courts and the legislative branch. The CBA and CBF will offer training and ongoing support to these much-needed teams.

Tutor/Mentor Week

In November, a city-wide Tutor/Mentor Week will provide a big opportunity to get the word out about the need for additional contributions of time and money to mentoring efforts. The week will begin on November 6 and include media coverage of some of the wonderful success stories that have come from many mentor-youth relationships. CBA President René A. Torrado, Jr. and CBF President Thomas Morsch will

host a breakfast for corporations and law firms to focus on the difference that corporate programs can make. The week will culminate with a Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference on November 10 and 11 hosted by the Tutor/Mentor Connection. This conference will give aspiring programs the tools they need to establish successful agendas and will offer many ideas for strengthening existing programs.

The CBA, through the leadership of Immediate Past President Richard J. Prendergast, established the CBA Mentor Advisory

Board to support expansion of our mentoring efforts. The Board members — Donald Hubert (Co-Chair), Reverend Thomas Paprocki (Co-Chair), Daniel Bassill, Thomas Demetrio, Betsy Densmore, Thomas Donnelly, Jann Dragovich, Leonard Gail, Judge Sophia Hall, James Morsch and Linda Rio — were selected because of their past experience in working with such programs.

In-House Tutoring Programs

The Chicago Bar Association not only supports existing mentor and tutor programs, but also has created two tutoring programs of its own. All volunteers for these programs come from the Chicago legal community; most are lawyers. Although they come from various practice areas and environments, they share a commitment to improving the lives of disadvantaged children. These legal professionals make the time each week to tutor children who need all the academic support they can get.

The YLS began a tutoring program for foster-care youth in 1993. We started with 20 boys, ages 10-15, from the Lawrence Hall Youth Center foster care group homes. Today the Lawrence Hall Tutoring Program is coordinated through the YLS by Alison Paul of Wilson & McIlvaine. There are almost 60 volunteer attorneys in the program, who each tutor one night per week. The program recently expanded to include tutoring girls in the Lawrence Hall system. A few more tutors are needed to work with the girls during the Monday night tutoring session.

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CBA Mentoring

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One of the keys to the success of the Lawrence Hall program has been the establishment of a strong array of donated educational materials, including computers, software, magazine subscriptions, workbooks, flash cards and books. Much of the funding for these items came from the YLS and the ABA Fund for Justice. Program coordinator Paul believes that the computers and educational software have proven to be the program's "most valuable resource."

Our second in-house tutoring program is operated by the YLS and the Chicago Bar Foundation at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. The program has 20 full-time attorney tutors who visit the Detention Center every Thursday evening from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The tutors focus on math, reading and art. Boys 10-13 years old receive one-on-one assistance from the lawyers.

Lend A Hand Fund And Award

The CBF has created a Lend A Hand Fund to encourage funding of tutor and mentor programs by the legal community. Participating programs receive small grants for

start up and maintenance.

In addition, the annual Thomas A. Demetrio Lend A Hand Award honors an exemplary tutor or mentor program and provides a \$2,000 award for program maintenance and improvement. The CBF also uses the award to publicize and encourage volunteer mentoring and tutoring.

Lend A Hand Mentoring Opportunities

Cabrini Connections

Cabrini Connections uses role models, recreational activities and tutoring/mentoring to help individual children realize their potential. The children are in junior high and high school and live in Cabrini Green. *Contact: Claudia Bellucci, Cabrini Connections, c/o Montgomery Ward, 21-N, 535 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610; (312) 467-2889.*

Partners Across Lifetimes

The Partners Across Lifetimes Program links individuals 50 years and over with at-risk youth. The goal is to help broaden the children's world through the formation of healthy, trusting relationships with older adults. Mentees are children between the ages of eight and 17, all of whom are clients of The United Charities Midway Center. *Contact: Dee Spiech, (312) 436-2400.*

United Charities/Blue Skies For Library Kids Tutoring Program

This program matches children (grades one through 10) with tutors at libraries in their communities. The purpose of the program is to help the children do better in school, raise their confidence and introduce them to the library. The children have goals to complete and graduate from the program at the end of their sessions. *Contact: Kim Fuchsgruber, (312) 436-2400.*

Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Big Brothers/Big Sisters matches children of single parents with dependable adults (19 or older) who have common interests and live near participating children. Couples may serve together. The children are ages seven to 13 and need to spend time with positive role models. *Contact: Big Brothers/Big Sisters, (312) 427-0637.*

Illinois Action For Children CASA Program

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. A CASA volunteer is a trained citizen who is appointed by a judge to rep-

resent the best interests of a child in court.

CASAs act as advocates (making sure each child has a safe, permanent home), investigators (interviewing the child, family and others so that all facts are before the court), facilitators (communicating between the court and social service agencies) and monitors (checking compliance with court orders). *Contact: Melinda Crosby, (312) 986-9591.*

The Ariel Foundation

This program began by "adopting" a sixth grade class and promising them college scholarships. The youth now receive scholarships for Catholic and private schools. Tutoring is offered Monday through Saturday. Families are engaged in the program through visits and phone calls. Also, younger siblings are invited to tutoring sessions. *Contact: Sarah Duncan, (312) 373-5212.*

The East Village Youth Program

This program begins with sixth graders at the Hans Christian Anderson Elementary School and follows the children through high school. Participants are prepared academically, socially and culturally for college and receive scholarships to make the dream of attending college a reality. *Contact: Jeannie Balanda, (312) 489-9088.*

Working In The Schools (WITS)

WITS is an intergenerational tutoring and mentoring program which serves elementary school children living in Cabrini Green. The program volunteers are primarily, but not exclusively, retired men and women and college students. *Contact: Maxine Duster, (312) 751-WITS.*

Saint Chrysostoms Church Tutoring

The Tuesday Night Tutoring Program serves 40-50 seventh and eighth grade boys and girls that attend Schiller Elementary School in the heart of the Cabrini Green community. The volunteer base is largely made up of professional people ages 20-45. The program goal is to help the kids with their homework and to provide positive role models. *Contact: Larry A. Green, (312) 201-9777. ■*

To participate in a Lend A Hand mentoring/tutoring program, contact the program directly. Then call CBA Director of Community Service Linda M. Rio at (312) 294-9611 to tell her which program you have selected. For more information about other volunteer opportunities listed in this article, please contact Rio.

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