



The "Chicago Plan" for Mentoring Program Support

Editor's note: Dan Bassill, head of Chicago's Tutor/Mentor Connection, has been posting his thoughts on the Mentornet over the past few weeks. Recently he discussed Chicago's yearly plan for recruiting volunteers, soliciting funds, developing trainings and holding award events. In the following article I have attempted to summarize the Chicago plan. —Jerry Sherk

Dan Bassill says Chicago has a three-part plan for drawing attention to mentoring:

- 1. Program site map**
- 2. Recruiting, training & fundraising, quarterly events**
- 3. End of Year Awards**

1. Develop Program Site Map: Collect a list of programs and plot them on a map. This makes it easy to see where programs are in relation to need and to each other, and it gives you a powerful, focused visual message. You will be able to use the map in a number of ways throughout the year.

2. Develop Quarterly Events:

--Volunteer Recruitment: In August and September we conduct our Mentor Recruitment Fair. Tables are set up in high traffic areas such as in office buildings and in libraries, and information is given to potential volunteers.

--Tutor/ Mentor Week & Fundraising Effort: (Note that the next three events are run in proximity of each other). This November effort kicks off with a fundraising benefit hosted by the Chicago Bar Foundation (1000 will attend). Sixty percent of funds raised will be awarded in small grants to one-on-one tutor/mentor programs.

--Leadership Conference: The third event is the Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference on November 9th and 10th, which we use to network, provide training to leaders and volunteers, and to draw others into the movement.

--Recognition Dinner: Fourth is a Tutor/Mentor Recognition Dinner that we hold on November 9th as part of the conference. Each of these events draws direct attention to every program who participates, and to our map of all programs who operate in our area, not just those at the conference.

(3) End of Year Awards: The final event is a May conference and second tutor/mentor week. Here we award cash grants from the Bar Foundation fund raising, and give "best practice" awards for recruitment, training, communications, etc. By getting programs to submit models we generate many ideas (not just the winner), which others could duplicate.

The key to the events just described is trying to mobilize programs to come together. If we programs put out their own messages at different times, the public just hears noise. They don't hear our call for corporate involvement, for more volunteers, etc. But if we stand together as a choir, singing the same "be a volunteer" or "be a donor" tune in August or November, we make the media pay attention, and from year to year we build a greater response from corporations and foundations.

Summary: You (San Diego) already have a structure to be doing this. You could start a planning team now, using the Coalition and MentorNet for brainstorming, and think of things you could do in November as part of a "tutor/mentor week" which would draw media attention to all of you, not just a few of you. Pick the same dates as we have for Chicago and we have a "national tutor/mentor week" and the potential for more national attention that would benefit each city that joins this effort.

As you do this you have greater chance that a CEO will begin to take notice and become involved in this cycle of events, and s/he will use your map to target distribution of resources. Once a few corporations begin thinking this way, more will follow.