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Thursday, December 7, 1995

Voice of the people



John Overmyer

While there's time

CHICAGO—Carlos Chambers died last week. He was just a kid. He was walking down State Street, and another kid walked up to him and shot him in the head.

He was a student that we at Cabrini Connections had been trying to reach for more than two years. We did not succeed.

This boy, really a young man of 17, had been attending our tutoring sessions off and on for two years. In fact, he had been coming to the programs at Montgomery Ward since elementary school. One of my volunteers/staffers tells me that she worked with him for a while when she started tutoring—six years ago. He was a good kid but had been living on the fence, not committing to school, still trying to avoid the streets. He never made the effort to get the most from what we were offering. We could see that in his grades and in his participation. We never really reached him.

Please help us. Please help the 200 other tutor/mentor programs in Chicago trying to reach kids in their neighborhoods. Find a program, any program, and send a contribution. Ask your boss if your company has a plan to fund tutor/mentor programs in neighborhoods where employees live, where factories or stores are located, or where they sell their product. If you can, do volunteer work to help these programs, or help start new programs in the many neighborhoods that don't have places for kids to go after school to meet with a tutor or mentor.

For Carlos, it is too late. But it's not too late for the thousands of other kids living in Chicago who might respond to the open heart of a tutor or a mentor—if one were available.

Daniel F. Bassill
Cabrini Connections