



Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

NATIONAL MENTORING CENTER BULLETIN



Reaching Out for Diversity

Recruiting minority mentors requires multiple strategies and long-term commitment

All over the U.S., growing numbers of adults from diverse ethnic groups are stepping forward to mentor kids. But minority youths who want mentors still outnumber minority volunteers in most communities. This shortfall has prompted many mentoring programs to ask, How important is ethnicity to the success of mentoring relationships? Is it better to pair kids quickly with a cross-race match, or hold out for a same-race match, sometimes leaving kids on waiting lists for years?

Communities are divided on this question. One viewpoint places ethnicity at the very heart of a meaningful mentoring match. The other sees ethnicity as just one of many factors—and not necessarily the central one—affecting the quality of a match.

Research isn't much help in deciding the debate

for a couple of reasons. First, solid research on the question is in short supply. Second, the research that does exist is not clear-cut. Overall, however, studies indicate that mentoring relationships that cross cultures are just as effective as those that share cultures.

While some groups strongly oppose mixed matches, most mentoring practitioners take a pragmatic stance. They agree that same-culture matches are desirable in many cases. But when a child is waiting, any qualified mentor—no matter what his or her ethnicity—can provide the support, friendship, and encouragement that child needs. So programs continue to match kids of color with White mentors, simultaneously seeking to build pools of volunteers from African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian, and other minority communities.

See *DIVERSITY*, page 4

Helping Kids Realize Dreams

A Houston program “adopts” classes of third-graders, hooking them up with “Dream Partners”

HOUSTON, Texas—I Have a Dream gives disadvantaged kids in Houston all sorts of support on their way to success—everything from tutoring sessions to homework clinics, case management, community referral, and even college scholarships. Each service is a solid rung on the ladder out of hopelessness and poverty.

But there's another key component—one whose impact on kids tops all the others: mentoring. “Of everything we do, mentoring probably has the most profound effect on the children,” says Paula Cizik, Executive Director of I Have a Dream-Houston. The 250 kids served by the program come from the crumbling neighborhoods of the inner city. What's

missing for many are caring adults who have the time and resources to take them to ballgames or museums, to monitor their progress in school, and to be a steady advocate and friend. Mentors, or “Dream Partners,” fill this gap for students at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center.

This struggling school is the hub of I Have a Dream. The program “adopts” entire classes of third-graders, sticking with them through high school and into college or vocational training, even if they change schools along the way. In the second semester of third grade, after program staff have gotten to know the kids—their personalities, interests, strengths,

See *DREAM*, page 3

PAGE 2

Resource Corner
Readings on
mentoring minorities

PAGE 6

Success Story
Building a bond
of friendship

PAGE 8

News Briefs
National
conference



Northwest Regional
Educational Laboratory

Read About Mentoring Minorities

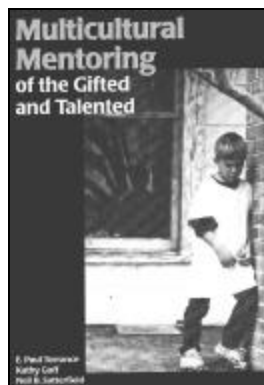
Our database provides an annotated listing of books and articles useful to JUMP sites and other programs

The following resources are just a few of the titles available for loan from the Mentoring Center's lending library to clients across the United States. Library materials may be requested by JUMP sites by telephone or e-mail or ordered from our Web site through our partner-site login on our home page (www.nwrel.org/mentoring). Non-JUMP sites and individuals may request materials by interlibrary loan through their local library. For further information, contact Ira Pollack or Michael Garringer at 800-547-6339, ext. 135.

■ **Multicultural Mentoring of the Gifted and Talented** (1998). This book by E. Paul Torrance, Kathy Goff, and Neil Satterfield contains a nice overview of mentoring relationships before moving into specific strategies for working with gifted, but potentially at-risk, children. It focuses on the academic and social development of gifted children. The book also has excellent appendices of resources and ideas.

■ **Diversity in Mentoring: Profiles from Programs Serving Minority and At-Risk Youth** (1990). This

RESOURCE CORNER



"This book focuses on the academic and social development of gifted children."

video profiles four mentor/mentee relationships. It covers Hispanic youth, mentors in schools, college students as mentors, and African American youth.

■ **Volunteer Recruitment Book** (1996). This book by Susan Ellis is designed to help nonprofit organizations recruit and retain volunteers.

■ **Volunteer Mentor Program: An Introductory Guide** (1997). This publication from the Virginia Office of Volunteerism is a guide to planning, maintaining, and evaluating a volunteer-based mentoring program. The appendix includes examples of existing programs and offers sample forms.

■ **Design and Implementation of a Mentor Program to Improve the Academic Achievement of Black Male High School Students** (1990). This paper by Michael Laughrey describes the design and implementation of a program to improve the academic achievement of African American male urban high school students through African Ameri-

See RESOURCES, page 7

Web Site Designed for Ease of Use

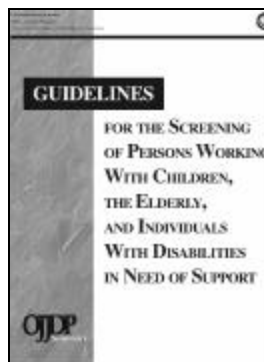
Our resource collection lets you find scores of mentoring resources, literally at your fingertips

As you can see from the Resource Corner above, the National Mentoring Center's "Resource Collection" contains hundreds of books, videos, and other materials. The entire collection can be searched on our Web site at www.nwrel.org/mentoring/resource-collection.html.

The Resource Collection page allows you to search not only our lending collection, but our collection of mentoring-related research articles as well. The lending collection provides a quick and easy way for you to get the most up-to-date training manuals, how-to guides, and program evaluation tools. We loan our materials to any mentoring program in the U.S. via interlibrary loan. JUMP sites may request materials directly by following the "Request" link at the bottom of an item.

Most mentoring research findings and materials are scattered and fragmented between a handful of Web sites, small organizational collections, and for-profit publishers. We are working hard to make the

WEB NEWS



"This is an important resource for anyone who works with volunteers."

Resource Collection pages ever easier to use and the premier mentoring resource on the Web.

Resource Tip. No matter what groups you may be targeting for recruitment, you will need to protect yourself and your mentees through a volunteer screening process. Last year, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention released an excellent resource to assist programs in the screening process. Guidelines for the Screening of Persons Working with Children, the Elderly, and Individuals with Disabilities in Need of Support is available in its full-text format via our Web site. It can be found on our "Other Resources" page (www.nwrel.org/mentoring/other-resources.html) along with a number of other full-text articles gathered from the Web. The guidelines cover everything from the legal framework for screening to detailed advice on developing and carrying out screening policies. This is an important resource for anyone who works with volunteers.

—Michael Garringer

DREAM: (continued from page 1)

and needs—children are matched with a volunteer tutor. It's not long before in-school tutoring evolves into full-fledged friendship for most matches. Week-day tutoring sessions typically end with mentor and student heading to a favorite burger joint or food court for a meal. Weekend outings add other dimensions—fun, cultural enrichment, conversation, and simple companionship—to the relationship.

Mentors go to the neediest kids first. Although the goal is to assign a mentor to each and every child, there aren't enough volunteers to go around. Of the 182 fourth- through seventh-graders actively participating in the program, 115 have been matched. The rest are still waiting.

Most mentors for I Have a Dream-Houston are White. The shortage of ethnic-minority volunteers—an issue faced by mentoring programs nationwide—is especially acute in programs like this one, which serve mostly minority children. Fully 99 percent of its clients—but fewer than 25 percent of its volunteers—are Hispanic or African American.

African American boys feel the ethnic disparity most strongly, says Joanna Chagra, Program Director. "Eighty to 90 percent of the African American children in our program don't have a male role model in the home," Chagra points out. "Most of them are being raised by their mothers or grandmothers or aunts. They don't have that male influence in the home."

The need for mentors is so acute, however, the program has not had the luxury to be too fussy about ethnicity. "Where we find qualified adults, we take them, period," she says.

In fact, ethnicity is only one criterion in making solid matches. For kids in I Have a Dream, gender appears to be equally critical—sometimes more so—for a successful match. Kids connect best with same-sex mentors, Chagra has found. Age is another important ingredient. The best mentors, she says, are over 35. "They're at the point that they want to start giving something back, so they're more committed," adds Cizik.

Still, cultural sensitivity is of central concern. The four-hour basic-training session required for all new mentors briefs them on cultural issues and prepares them for problems they may encounter. Poverty is

at least as important as ethnicity in creating barriers and misunderstandings for mentors, most of whom come from middle-class backgrounds, Cizik notes.

I Have a Dream-Houston recruits mentors in several ways:

- Informal networking and word-of-mouth
- Making presentations at corporations
- Participating in volunteer fairs
- Contacting faith-based organizations (often targeting community-outreach programs)
- Running public-service announcements on the major TV networks

The best results, says Cizik, come from word-of-mouth (volunteers telling friends and family about their mentoring experience) and brown-bag presentations at businesses. After a recent presentation, 45 employees filled out forms expressing interest in volunteering, she reports.

Plans are pending for targeted recruitment in 1999. To draw more African American males, the program will step up its outreach to local churches this year, Cizik says.

Also in the works is a program evaluation being developed by the University of Houston. Using an assessment instrument designed by university researchers, program staff are collecting annual data to track the effectiveness of the various program components in achieving their ultimate goal: high school graduation and ongoing success for students. The data are just starting to come in, allowing the program to better judge the success of its strategies in recruiting and matching mentors.

But even before the findings are analyzed, there's one thing program staff know for certain: A mentor's best asset is commitment. It's a characteristic that cuts across ethnicity, age, and gender, Chagra emphasizes.

"If somebody chooses to become a mentor, it's very important that they're committed to that, because it's very important to the child," she says. "The relationship starts to grow and blossom when the child actually sees and feels the commitment from the volunteer. It's very hard to reengage students after they've been let down."

For more information on I Have a Dream-Houston, call Paula Cizik or Joanna Chagra at (713) 523-7326.

—Lee Sherman

PROGRAM PROFILE

Founded in 1988, I Have a Dream-Houston was inspired by New York philanthropist Eugene Lang, who promised 61 East Harlem sixth-graders he would send them to college if they completed high school. Since those beginnings in 1981, the concept has been adopted in more than 60 cities in nearly 30 states. Students who finish high school receive \$2,000 for college or vocational training. This JUMP site receives funding from foundations and individual donors, in addition to support from OJJDP.

FAST FACTS

- Nationwide, there are about as many kids waiting for mentors as kids being served. Boys and minorities wait the longest. There are 100 minority youths waiting for every 100 matched, compared to 65 White youths waiting. There are 133 minority males waiting for every 100 matched.
- The number of minority volunteers with BBBS swelled from about 8,000 in 1990 to more than 11,000 in 1992—a whopping 36 percent increase. Still, the number of minority kids seeking mentors is outpacing the growth in minority mentorship. One study showed the number of matched minority volunteers (6 - 20 percent) was half that of matched minority youths (12 - 43 percent).
- The ethnicity of outreach staff is strongly tied to minority recruitment. One study showed that agencies where minority staff assist in or are responsible for minority recruitment have twice as many minority volunteers than at other agencies.

Source: Big Brothers Big Sisters: A Study of Program Practices, by Kathryn Furano, Phoebe Roaf, Melanie Styles, and Alvia Branch. Public/Private Ventures, Winter 1993.

DIVERSITY: (continued from page 1)

Targeted Recruiting

Building pools of minority volunteers is a long-term process. Just as it takes time for a mentor to develop the trust and confidence of a child, so too, does it take time for programs to develop trust and credibility within targeted minority communities. Researchers warn against seeking a “quick fix” to the shortage of minority volunteers.

In forging bonds with minority communities, mentoring programs need to focus on two crucial issues: (1) making a long-term commitment to the community, and (2) portraying an overall image that is sensitive and welcoming to minority communities.

There are many avenues into minority communities: faith-based organizations, professional associations, fraternal organizations, civic groups, sports teams, youth-serving programs, neighborhood political organizations, minority-owned businesses, and minority-oriented media such as newspapers and radio stations. But a one-time ad in a local paper or a single presentation to a business group is likely to reap few recruits. Instead, programs should grow roots in the community by forming ongoing partnerships with networks of local agencies and with local leaders.

“Gaining the acceptance and support of key segments of communities of color is crucial,” advises Pass It On, a volunteer recruitment manual published by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America in 1994.

The “sales pitch” on the need for volunteers should come later—after informational and exploratory meetings have laid the groundwork for mutual respect. Programs must have the patience to wait for a payoff.

“Involvement over time is highly prized (in minority communities),” Pass It On emphasizes. “An alliance may not produce much in the way of results immediately. Indeed, it may be several months or even several years before there is significant recognition of the program throughout an ethnic community.”

But forming alliances in a minority community is just part of the picture in targeted recruiting. Another key is refining the program’s image to mesh with that community’s cultural perspective. Image—the pub-

lic’s perception of the program—is influenced mainly by the three points of public contact with the program: (1) personnel, (2) publicity, and (3) policy.

Image polishing begins by selecting members of targeted groups for key staff and board positions. Programs with minority chairpersons and outreach staff have the best track records recruiting minority mentors, research shows.



When designing printed materials, such as brochures and newsletters, and developing ads for radio and TV, programs should consult with members of minority communities. Input from the target audience is critical to avoiding misconceptions or cultural gaffs.

“Certain ideas may strike a responsive chord among one group and gain a neutral or even hostile response from other prospective target audiences,” Pass It On cautions. Focus groups or review committees can help programs craft a message that plays well to a target audience, the manual notes.

Finally, programs should review their policies and procedures to uncover unintentional prejudices. Questions to ask include, Does our screening process needlessly rule out otherwise qualified minorities? Can we do away with certain requirements that block some minority group members from mentoring? Car ownership, for example, is one requirement that can hinder some applicants. (Of course, the safety and well-being of children must always come first in any review of screening procedures.)

See DIVERSITY, next page

SUGGESTED
READING

“Recruiting from different ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds necessitates multiple strategies.”

- This important guidebook, **Pass It On: Volunteer Recruitment Manual**, published by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America in 1994, gives an in-depth overview of mentor recruitment. Topics include: cross-racial and cross-cultural matching; staff and board diversity; community networks; media messages; and direct recruiting. In a discussion of cultural awareness and sensitivity training, the manual stresses that “a good trainer can help everyone look closely at issues of race, class, ethnicity, economic status, and gender to determine which preconceptions, prejudices, or stereotypes need to be understood, clarified, and changed.” To order, contact Energize Inc. at 800-395-9800 or www.energizeinc.com (\$35).

- The report, **Big Brothers Big Sisters: A Study of Volunteer Recruitment and Screening** by Phoebe Roaf, Joseph Tierney, and Danista Hunte, provides research-based information on working with minority communities to build credibility and recruit mentors. Published by Public/Private Ventures in 1994, the report states: “Using one set of recruitment materials is unlikely to attract a diverse group of volunteers.

Recruiting from different ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds necessitates multiple strategies. Given that most parents and BBBS agency staff say they would like children to be matched with an adult of the same race, and that minority boys are disproportionately represented on BBBS agency waiting lists, specific minority outreach strategies are vital.” To order, call P/PV at (215) 557-4400 (\$6).

- The 1991 monograph, **Minority Male Mentoring in the 1990s: A Practitioner’s Experience**, published by the Urban Institute, offers the insights of Andre Watson, former director of the Male Youth Project, a church-based mentoring program in Washington, D.C. “Ideally, youths should be matched with mentors of the same race,” Watson writes. “However, there is a shortage of Black adult males volunteering to serve as mentors. . . . In many cases, the paucity of Black mentors dictates that Black youths be paired with White mentors. It should be recognized that differences in race are not a barrier to a successful mentor/youth relationship.” For more information, contact Ira Pollack or Michael Garringer at 800-547-6339, ext. 135.

DIVERSITY: (continued from page 4)

Cross-Cultural Matches

Ethnicity is not the only obstacle programs face when matching kids with mentors. Poverty itself can create barriers between mentors (who are mostly middle-class) and their young friends (who are usually disadvantaged).

But these gaps of class and culture don’t spell doom for mixed matches. In a 1996 synthesis of mentoring research, Cynthia Sipe reports little correlation between ethnicity and effectiveness in mentoring matches. That’s because other program components—screening, orientation, training, support, and supervision—can compensate for or even override ethnicity in determining the success of a match. And there are other factors—shared interests, for instance, and neighborhood proximity—that figure

strongly in the match’s success, research suggests.

In cross-cultural matches, a critical component of success is what researcher Elaine Blechman calls “bicultural competence”—the ability to communicate well in both worlds. Mixed matches give kids a chance to develop cultural fluidity, increasingly valuable in a multiethnic society. In mentors, cultural competence can be shored up through training. Sensitivity and diversity training is a must for both staff and volunteers. It “should be viewed as a necessity rather than as a luxury” for mentoring programs, *Pass It On* asserts.

The best matches are built on trust, consistency, and unfailing support—characteristics that fall outside cultural divisions. And there’s one point on which all researchers agree: Kids who have a caring adult in their lives more often have the strength to succeed in life than kids who go it alone.

—Lee Sherman

From Fine Arts to Car Parts: A Match Made of Contrasts

A boy and his mentor build a close friendship on sharing new experiences

SUCCESS STORY

“Just being there, spending time together—letting him know someone is there for him—is the most important thing”

PORTLAND, Oregon—The conventional wisdom on mentoring would predict difficulties for the match between 47-year-old John and 13-year-old Ty. That wisdom says the most successful pairs share the same neighborhood, ethnic background, and interests. John and Ty, however, are a study in contrasts. John lives in the suburbs; Ty lives in the city. John likes theatre and art; Ty loves hotrods and monster trucks. John is White; Ty is biracial.

But John and Ty are beating the odds. Two years into their mentoring relationship, this writer-artist and his car-crazy protégé have forged a bond of trust and friendship that defies expectations. John attributes their success largely to the unconditional support he gives the boy.

“I didn’t have any big goals in mind for him, like getting him on the track team or making sure he did his homework,” says John, who divides his professional life between technical writing and painting, both oils and watercolors. “Just being there, spending time together—letting him know someone is there for him—is the most important thing.”

John hooked up with Ty through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Portland, where he serves as a board member as well as a mentor. Ty was nine when he came home from school one day to find his grandmother on the phone to BBBS, requesting a “big” for the boy she had adopted as a baby. Health problems prevented Ty’s mom from caring for him properly. Ty’s dad was mostly absent from his life.

“Ty needed some young life around him,” says his grandmother, Martha. She laughingly admits that she and her husband Dave are not outgoing. “Ty needed someone who was willing to go out and do all the things that we’re too lazy to do.”

Ty waited “a good year,” Martha says, for a mentor we’ll call Stan. But Stan’s personal problems got in the way of the match. After a few months of sporadic visits that kept Ty “wondering when he was going to show up,” Stan got divorced and left town. Meanwhile, John had signed on as a volunteer and was undergoing the six-month screening process

required by the agency. This time, Ty waited only four months for his new “big.”

Ty confesses to feeling shy about meeting his new match. John was jittery, too. A single guy with no children of his own, he had little experience relating to kids. Should he tutor Ty? he wondered. Should he teach him things—pass on important lessons about life? No, the case manager at BBBS counseled. Just be a friend. As the relationship develops, she told John, opportunities to be a teacher or a role model will open up naturally.

And so they have. Ty’s passion for cars has paved avenues for learning as well as fun. A car fanatic ever since he ran his first remote-controlled model at age two, Ty now is saving his money for a real set of wheels. Already, he plans to enlist the help of John (formerly an upholstery-shop owner) in revamping the interior. “I want to get his opinion,” Ty says.

The boy’s dream of attending Benson Polytechnic High School and then Wyoming Technical Institute to study auto mechanics is beginning to bring the issue of school and grades to the surface. Ty doesn’t like to talk to John about his report cards or classes (his favorite class, he says, is “the bus ride home”). John hasn’t pushed the topic. But little by little, John has begun pointing out the connection between education and life goals.

Mostly, though, the twosome just hang out. Every Saturday morning, John makes the 15-minute drive from his quiet, westside cul-de-sac to Ty’s blue-collar, eastside neighborhood. Together, they decide in advance what they want to do—ride bikes, perhaps, or check out a sculpture exhibit at the art museum. Go inline skating along the river. See the baby rhino at the zoo, take in a hotrod show, browse around the Saturday Market, take a camping trip. On one such trip, John landed a rainbow trout and Ty hauled in a bucket of crawdads. The next morning, they breakfasted on fresh fish.

One Christmas, John took a friend and her son along with Ty to see the Christmas Ships—an annual parade of boats festooned with lights cruising the Willamette River. Another Christmas, John took

Ty and Martha to see a Victorian mansion decked out for the holidays and open to the public. But of all the events in John and Ty's two-year history, the monster-truck show stands out for both as a major highlight—for Ty, because of his fondness for anything on four wheels, and for John because of a newfound delight in goofing around. "I didn't have a lot of experience just hanging out and playing," John admits. "Ty has introduced me to a lot of stuff."

One sunny April Saturday, the mentor and his young friend huddle intently in John's family room, putting the last touches on John's model car—a 1937 Ford panel truck. (Ty had long ago finished his model, a metallic-green 1960 Chevy Impala, but John was lagging behind.) They look over Ty's sketches of flame and wave designs, agreeing on a splash motif to decorate the miniature truck. "Oh, yeah, I like that a lot," John says. "That's a neat splash."

Consistency—regular and frequent meetings—is a

key characteristic of successful matches, studies have found. Unlike Ty's first Big Brother, who kept his "little" guessing about their meetings, John shows up on Saturdays with the predictability of the morning newspaper. "Ty and John have gotten together somewhere in the neighborhood of 106 times," Martha reports. "They do not miss a week. John is superb. He goes over and above (the requirements of the agency)."

John, long over his early jitters, has relaxed into the role of "big"—so much so, in fact, he's planning to adopt a child of his own. "I've learned a lot, and gotten a lot more comfortable about being with kids," he says. From Ty's perspective, the best thing John has given him is the chance to "get out and do a lot more things," he says.

Adds Martha: "Ty has an open, new, fresh approach to life. I'm just so grateful for the Big Brother program. They have brought Ty into the big, wide world."

RESOURCES: (continued from page 2)

can adult mentors from both the community and the school's faculty.

MORE READING

The following list of resources is a small sample of articles and reports found by doing a subject search for "mentoring minorities" in the National Mentoring Center's "Articles Listing" database. To conduct your own search and produce a custom bibliography, visit our Web site at <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/resource-collection.html>; in the "Collection" field, choose Articles Listing. Although we cannot provide the full text of most of the articles in the collection because of copyright law, it is quite useful for putting together a list of citations and references that your local librarian can track down for you.

■ **Minority Male Mentoring in the 1990s: A Practitioner's Experience** (1991). Some of the main issues surrounding the operation of mentoring programs for minority youth are outlined and illustrated through the example of the Male Youth Project. (ED359 312)

■ **Adolescent African American Male Self-Esteem: Suggestions for Mentoring Program Content** (1991). The processes by which mentors might improve

the self-esteem of economically vulnerable African American youth are explored, drawing on previous research. (ED359 313)

■ **Mentoring Among Native Americans: Does It Work? EEO Monthly** (<http://www.adp.cahwnet.gov/pdf/1128.pdf>). This article looks at the ways in which mentoring has always been a part of Native American society and explores how it can be effective in dealing with today's youth.

■ **Community Contributions to School Outcomes of African American Students. Education and Urban Society** (November 1991). Community involvement protects students from the adverse impact of school failure in several ways that are particularly important for African Americans.

■ **Mobility Strategies of Successful Hispanic High School Students** (1990). This study examines how successful Hispanic American students have managed their upward mobility, specifically the decision to work hard and get to college. (ED 369 862)

■ **Using Mentoring to Improve Academic Programming for African American Male Youths with Mild Disabilities. School Counselor** (May 1997). This article looks at how mentoring can improve academic performance and reduce delinquency among African American youth who have been struggling to succeed.

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NEWS
BRIEFS

■ BBBSA National Conference

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno will be among the featured guests at the 1999 Big Brothers Big Sisters of America national conference to be held in Chicago June 22-25. The weeklong event—"Fulfilling the Promise: Quality, Growth, Leadership, Participation"—will offer a variety of sessions and workshops, including an all-day preconference on school-based mentoring to be held on June 21. For more information, visit the BBBSA Web site at www.bbbsa.org or call (215) 567-7000.

■ News Tips Wanted

Do you have a story idea to share? We're looking for tips on promising or innovative practices from folks who work in mentoring programs, both big and small, around the U.S. that we can share with our readers. If so, we'd love to hear from you. Please call Editor Lee Sherman at 1-800-547-6339, ext. 516, or e-mail her at shermanl@nwrel.org. We're also looking for information on upcoming conferences, workshops, and other events of interest to mentoring programs. Please send those items to Assistant Editor and Web Developer Michael Garringer, National Mentoring Center, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204, or e-mail him at garringm@nwrel.org.

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