

Norwalk Mentor Program

2019 End of Year Report



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2018-2019
School Year

82%

Of mentors returned this school year. Our retention rate is

23% higher

than the national average for volunteers

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service

280

Mentor/mentee matches as of June 2019

72

New mentors were trained and matched this year

286

Mentors, mentees, and family members at our January Event

379

Attendees at our End of Year Outing

11,000

Hours of mentoring

\$265,000+

Collective value of our mentors' time according to *Independent Sector*

Norwalk Mentor Program

The Norwalk Mentor Program is dedicated to increasing the wellbeing of Norwalk's youth by matching a student in need of support with a caring adult from the community. One hour per week can positively change a child's life.

Our mission is to encourage the social, academic and mental growth of Norwalk's youth through a one-on-one mentoring relationship where a caring adult serves as a role model to a student who is going through a difficult period or faces new challenges.

In Norwalk, a 2018 survey recently revealed some unfortunate truths: Students are not receiving the support they need to become well balanced adults and avoid risky behaviors.

- More than half of students surveyed feel that they don't have caring adults to rely on other than their parents.
- Most feel that their community doesn't value them, and very few report having good adult role models. Studies show that children who have these supports are at a lower risk for drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and suicide.

Source: Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth for Norwalk CT schools.

2017 Search Institute

Mentoring assures young people that there is someone who cares about them, lets them know that they are not alone to deal with day to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter.

We need all of Norwalk's children to thrive.



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Our Impact

National research shows that mentoring positively impacts and improves chronic absenteeism, problem behaviors, academic performance:

- Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class
- Mentees are 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college
- School based mentoring program participants had significantly fewer unexcused absences and discipline referrals and significantly higher scores on measures of social connectedness

(Sources: Public/Private Ventures Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters; Mentoring.org: The Mentoring Effect; Gordon, Downey, and Bangert. School Community Journal: Effects of School Based Mentoring Program on School Behavior and Measures of Adolescent Connectedness)

This year, Norwalk Public Schools has recognized the work of the Norwalk Mentor Program by providing support to expand the program to reach more students. This strengthened partnership will work to strategically target students who have exhibited problem behaviors or are chronically absent.

Students who exhibit these patterns have been shown to have higher drop-out rates, and are at higher risk for abuse or poverty related issues in the home.

(Source: Attendance Works)

A mentor provides stability and safety to a child, and through the consistency of the relationship are able to make changes in these areas.





Our Mentors

Our mentors are a diverse group: retirees, professionals, stay at home parents, teachers, police officers, grandparents, young adults. They share one thing: A desire to make a difference.



Our mentors care about their community and the next generation. They share their time and their hearts with a child who needs them. They will tell you that the time they spend means as much to them as it does to their mentees. The Norwalk Mentor Program is thankful to our dedicated mentors.

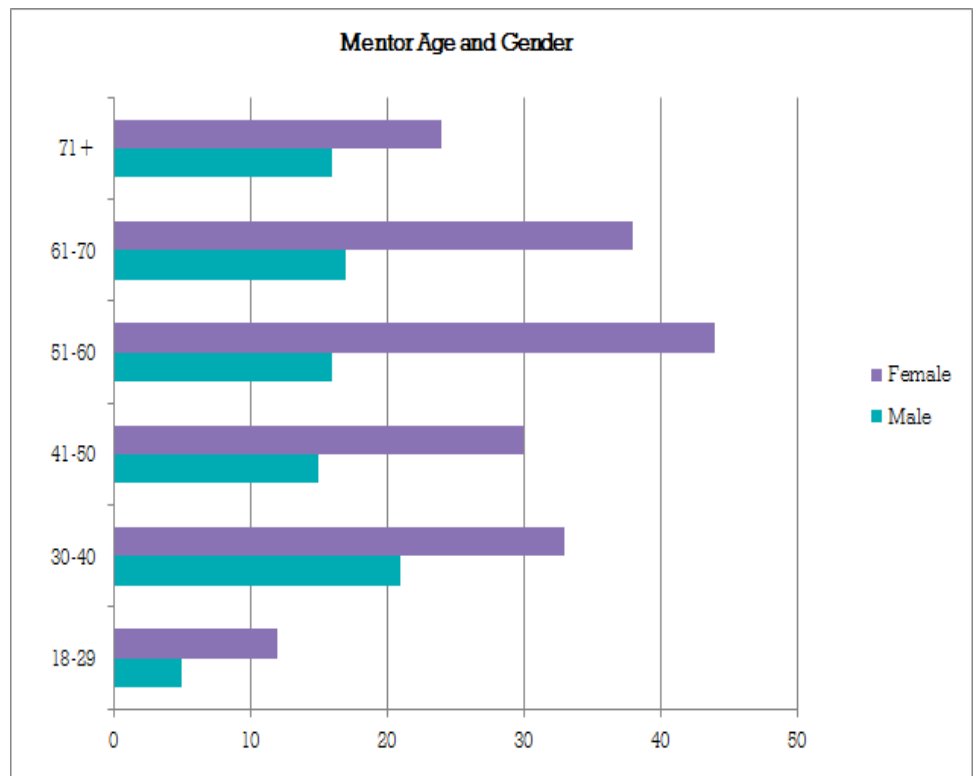
"...His grades were really problematic the year before mentoring... Last year he became an honor student and was able to really turn things around."

-Mentor to an 8th grader



"I love being a mentor! It helps me focus on what is truly important in my own life, and I am rewarded every time I see my mentee by watching her grow and mature."

-Mentor to a 3rd grader





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Our Mentors

"My mentees look forward to our meetings each week. They really love having someone's full attention for an hour a week. We see all kinds of emotions from these kids. My mentee graduated from middle school last night. Her face lit up when she saw I cared enough about her to attend."

These relationships are important."

-Mentor to an 8th Grader



Requirements to be a Mentor:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be able to pass a criminal background check, TB check, and reference checks
- Live or work in the Norwalk area
- Attend a two hour orientation training
- Commit to one hour a week during the school day for one school year

98%

Say that the program has enriched their life

95%

Would recommend NMP to their friends

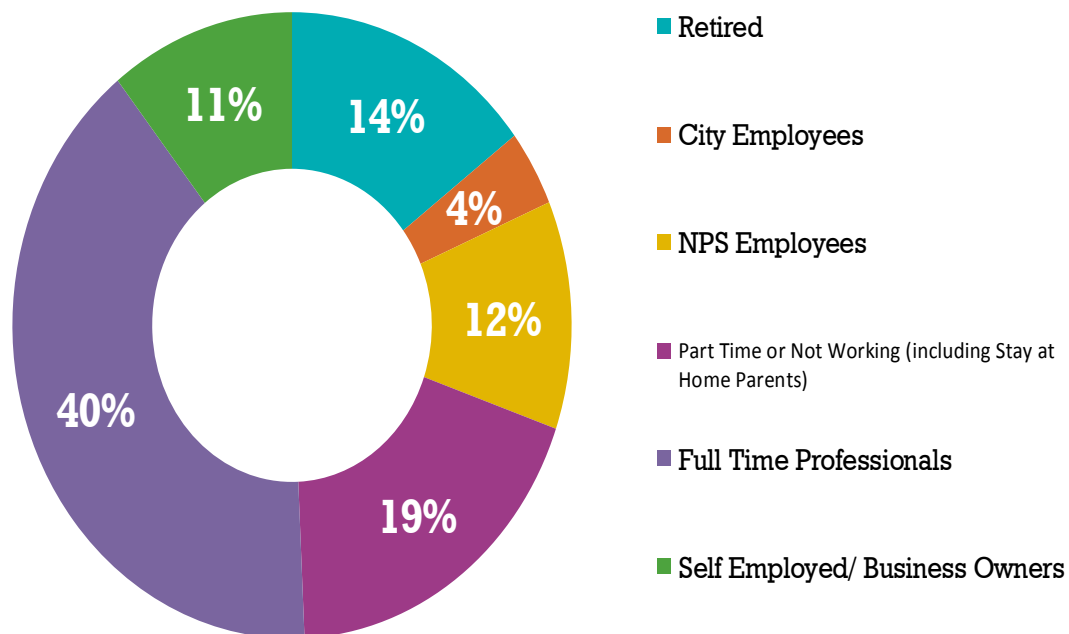
54%

Felt mentees had higher expectations of themselves since they were first matched

67%

Report their mentee is better able to express their feelings

Where Our Mentors Work





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Our Mentees

*"I love my mentor. I couldn't ask for anyone else. She helps me learn and grow. I feel that **I am always more excited to come to school.** I am more productive and communicative. I always come to school ready because of her."*

-6th Grader



78%

Receive free or reduced Lunch

14%

Have a disability or learning challenge

12%

Speak another language at home

50%

Male

50%

Female

80%

Of our students said their mentor helps them come to school more often and better prepared



*"We do homework together, read together, and **the best part: laugh together.** When my mentor came in to my life it felt good. I felt safe like I have never been."*

-5th Grader

88%

Say having a mentor helps them be kinder to others

94%

Say they try harder in school and feel better about their future because of their mentor

*"I like my mentor very much because she's my best friend, and because she's always there for me. Since having a mentor, I've felt more relaxed, happy, and always knowing that I have her by my side. **She makes me have more hope.**"*

-6th Grader





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Coming Full Circle

The Norwalk Mentor Program was established in 1986 and has been serving students continuously for the past 33 years. Because of this longevity and the reputation the Program has maintained, we have been honored to have former mentees in the program join us once again as mentors.

One former mentee is **Riki Stevens**, singer /songwriter and 2018 winner of *CT's Got Talent*. She shared her beautiful voice with us at our January Mentor Event and was the featured guest at HSC's annual fundraiser, the SONO Stroll. Riki shared a few words about how much her mentor impacted her life:



Hi, my name is Ricketta Stevens. I am a singer, songwriter, actress, and musician and I have been involved with the Norwalk Mentor Program since I was 5 years old. I would first like to start off with how deeply grateful I am for the Program, because it provided me with support when I needed it the most. I'll never forget how I held on to my mentors legs after our first visit at school. Getting to know her brightened up my cloudy life! **My behavior and grades changed drastically from having that person in my corner rooting for me.** Her warm hugs became my regular place to run to, I looked forward to witnessing the light in her eyes at concerts, or when I finally found the confidence to complete my homework all by myself. My cheeks always hurt from the bashful smiles I'd show whenever she'd brag about how proud she was of me to teachers and her friends. My mentor became more than just a mentor-- she became my family. To this day, she chooses to refer to me as her "Baby girl, her first born, her daughter."

From this experience, I know that it is essential that every child deserves to be seen, heard, accepted, and validated. This support has helped me feel worthy enough to strive for greater things in my life, which have made me such a happy person. I am so grateful for this program and what it means to me. I am grateful for my mentor and her commitment to the work. As I reminisce, the memories invite a quote in to my mind: "It takes a village to raise a child." With that being said, I'd like to take the opportunity to say thank you to the Norwalk Mentor Program and my mentor for being my village. I do not know where I would be without you.



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Mentor Impact

80%

Of our students
exhibit more self-
confidence

75%

Of our students
show signs of
increased trust in
adults

60%

Have increased
class participation
and have better
relationships with
their peers

58%

Have achieved
better grades and
show improved
academic
readiness

From the School Staff

We have always relied on our close relationship with Norwalk Public Schools in order to reach children in need. Our liaisons at each school help us to prioritize students who need support and connect our mentors to the school community. At the end of each school year, they share the progress they have seen in their students. We asked school staff to tell us what changes they have seen in their students since being matched with a mentor.

"This student is more confident and open. She completes her work with effort. She is excelling. I have seen a huge difference in her demeanor and academic performance from last year."

-A Middle School teacher

"I've seen big improvements—more focus, fewer behavior disruptions. Big changes in attitude and respect. They have a solid, trusting relationship."

-Elementary School Social Worker



Special thanks to retiring school social worker Nancy Fuzesi who has been a school liaison since the Program began more than 30 years ago.

"My student has focused on his school work and raised his grades. He loves his mentor and the ability to have someone to talk to."

- High School Assistant Principal





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What Parents Say

99%

Report that their
child seems
happier

88%

Report that their
child is more
responsible

60%

Report that their
child gets home-
work completed
more regularly

72%

Report their child
has a better
attitude toward
school



*"I love my son's mentor. He genuinely loves my son and has made such a **positive impact** on him. He is learning from a male role model and it gives him the confidence to do better."*

-Parent of a 5th Grader

*"My daughter is **more eager to go to school** on the day she sees her mentor."*

-Parent of a Kindergarten Student

*"My child has **more confidence** in telling us what happens in school and is **more responsible with her homework**."*

-Parent of a 2nd Grader

*"She realizes that not everyone you love leaves you. Her dad is in and out of her life and **her mentor has shown her stability** by always being there. Thank you for caring."*

-Foster Parent to an 8th Grader





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Annual Events



"I LOVE that this program is available to help students. I had the opportunity to finally go to an event with my mentee and I saw a number of kids that I know. They all seem to be happy with their mentors and I also love that the mentors know one another and know each other's mentee."

-Middle School Mentor



In addition to weekly meetings between mentors and mentees, participants in the program are invited to several events throughout the year. These events bring together mentors, mentees and their families to enjoy each other's company and introduce the mentees to new experiences they might not otherwise be able to enjoy.

- **Fall Welcome Back Breakfasts at schools**
- **National Mentoring Month Evening at Stepping Stones Museum**
- **Year-End Outing at Bowlmor**
- **Ongoing mentor trainings on a variety of topics**





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Our Graduates

Our Graduates will be attending:

Albertus Magnus
College
Connecticut School
of Broadcasting
Iona College
Johnson and Wales
University
Lincoln Technical
Institute
Norfolk State
University
Norwalk
Community College
Rhode Island
School of Design
Southern
Connecticut State
University
University of
Connecticut
University of New
Haven
Virginia State
University
Western
Connecticut State
University

40% of our matches have been together for at least 3 years, with some of those having been together for 10 years. **This translates into years of consistent support for students who would otherwise struggle.**



"This Program is truly amazing! I have loved mentoring and becoming my mentee's friend! I hope I have helped her along the way, but she has certainly had an impact on me! I am so incredibly proud of her, not only for graduating, but getting into college! She is doing great things and I plan on continuing my friendship with her! I can't wait to see where her journey takes her."

-Lauren N. , Mentor for 9 years

23 mentees graduated this year. We are celebrating a **100% graduation rate**. All are college bound. 1/3 have been with their mentor since Elementary school.

Congratulations grads!



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Sustainability– HEROES

The Norwalk Mentor Program relies on funding from local corporations, foundations, fundraising events and private donors. There is no federal or state funding to support the program. **According to the National Mentoring Partnership, the average cost to run a mentoring program is \$1,695 per match per year.** This includes the cost of recruiting, background checks, trainings, database, staffing, events and other activities for mentors and mentees. **The Norwalk Mentor Program operates on less than half of this amount.**

Another source of funding is our **HEROES Sponsorship**. **HEROES** can be a person, a group of people, or an organization that sponsors one or more mentor/mentee matches. This money goes back into the program, towards our program events, mentor workshops, background checks and general operating costs.

HEROES

- Individual, group, company or organization can be a HEROES Sponsor
- As little as \$750 annually helps support the Norwalk Mentor Program
- Receive information about your sponsored student
- Hear from your sponsored student twice a year
- Receive invitations to our two annual events



Become one of our
Super **HEROES**

Helping
Enrich
Relationships
Of
Every
Student





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A Note From the Program Director

It has been another successful year for the Norwalk Mentor Program. Working with our partners, our mentors, our funders, local businesses and school staff, we ended our school year with 280 mentor/mentee matches. I am proud to be part of a meaningful, high quality program which has existed for 33 years.

This year was one of great progress. Norwalk Public Schools recognizes the importance of caring mentors to the growth and empowerment of their students and have amplified their endorsement of the program. We have been asked to recruit and train at least 100 new mentors for the next school year, a monumental but exciting task! To that end, we have hired Hannah Knox as Program Coordinator to assist in supporting and expanding the program. Together with our partners in the community and the support of our agency, the Humans Services Council, we will help more of Norwalk's children flourish and thrive.

We appreciate the commitment of everyone involved with the Norwalk Mentor Program for continuing to make a difference in the lives of our young people.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pratt,
Norwalk Mentor Program



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Thank You

**For Supporting the Norwalk Mentor Program during the 2018-2019 School Year
as Grantors, Events Sponsors and HEROES**

**For information about the
Norwalk Mentor
Program or to become
a mentor, contact:**

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City of Norwalk
Bradford Craighead (H)
Peggy Craighead (H)
Sheila & John Crowe
East Norwalk Boating & Yacht Club
Eversource (H)
FactSet
Fairfield County Bank
First County Bank Foundation
Generoso Electric
GenRE
Gordon Foundation
Henry E. Niles Foundation
Horizon Foundation
Iridian Asset Management
Barbara Kelly (H)
King Industries
Kiwanis Club of Norwalk (H)
Brian Lindner
Lone Pine Foundation

Louis Dreyfus Company
Marsh USA
MBI
Newman's Own Foundation
Norwalk Police Activities League
Norwalk Public Schools
PDC International
People's United Community Foundation
Reed Exhibitions
Matthew & Sarah Schimenti
Larry Selnick
Sequel International
Harvey Skolnick
Mike Sleet
Spinnaker Real Estate Partners
Stew Leonard's
Trinity Fund
York County Community Foundation
And others

(H) indicates HEROES sponsorship with a donation of \$750 or greater.

Bold indicates long term supporters— organizations that provide both financial support and encourage their employees/ members to mentor.

Thank you
to all of our Program Participants