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**Mentorship holds positive impact for adults, research says**

***74% of those who had a meaningful mentor say that person contributed significantly to their success later in life, according to a study by Mentoring.***

**WHEELING, W.Va.—** In honor of January being [National Mentoring Month](https://www.mentoring.org/), the Youth Mentoring Network (YMN), a mentoring program through Youth Services System, Inc. (YSS), highlights mentorship's positive impact on youth today.

According to the Mentoring [website](https://www.mentoring.org/mentoring-impact/#:~:text=74%25,their%20success%20later%20in%20life.), those who have had a mentor are more likely to succeed academically, socially and economically. The website says, “Young adults who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor.” The website also states, “Youth who meet with mentors regularly are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking.”

A recent Mentoring [study](https://www.mentoring.org/resource/who-mentored-you/) shows that youth who are growing up with no adult and/or mentor support are much more likely to struggle with mental health, substance use, and their personal family life.

Jill Eddy, YSS CEO, says, “Circumstances sometimes leave children with little to no support at home.” Eddy continues, “No matter the reason, mentors are there for the child during difficult times.”

Eddy and her husband spent four years in the YMN program mentoring siblings and saw how much a mentor impacts a child’s life. Eddy shares, “They are now thriving in high school, and one will be graduating this year.”

The program works like a matching system. When a child enters into the program, they are matched with a mentor with similar interests to ensure compatibility. In the past fiscal year, the YMN has had 28 mentor-mentee matches.

Michelle Dietrich, YMN mentor, says, “I became a mentor because I saw the impact on a few students at my school who were matched with someone through YSS.” Dietrich is the Principal at Steenrod Elementary School and has been a mentor for the past four years. After her kids were adults, Dietrich felt she had the extra time to spend with a child and applied to be a mentor.

A few mentees have been in the program for several years, and they have great feedback on how the program and their mentor have guided them. One mentee shares, “[Having a mentor] has made me want to go to school more, and it’s made me work harder to earn what I have.”

Thanks to funding from the Helen J. Prince Foundation, J.C. Williams Charitable Trust, The United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley, and the Community Foundation of the Ohio Valley (CFOV) Community Impact Fund the program hosts monthly sponsored activities for the mentors and mentees. Activities include horseback riding, seeing shows at the Capitol Theatre Music Hall, visiting zoos, rock climbing, hockey games, and much more.

The YMN program is shifting into the schools within the existing Expanded School Mental Health (ESMH) program. The program would also like to see more mentors and mentees involved in group mentoring, especially at the middle and high school levels.

Ashley Flaherty, ESMH Coordinator, says, “Our decision to transition the YMN into Brooke Middle School reflects our commitment to creating a nurturing environment where students have continuous access to positive role models and academic support.” Flaherty continues, “Regular interactions with mentors help students build confidence in their abilities, fostering a sense of self-worth and motivation to succeed.”

Mentorship can fit into everyone’s life no matter the circumstance. The program helps many families; single parents, grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, and children with behavioral or developmental challenges.

Requirements to become a mentor include having a valid driver’s license, passing a background check, being over the age of 24 and committing to a minimum of four hours spent with your mentee per month.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or having your child enter the program, or if you have any questions, visit the YMN [website](https://youthmentoring.youthservicessystem.org/) or contact Sarah Gamble at (304) 233-9627 ext. 301 or via email at [sgamble@ysswv.com](mailto:sgamble@ysswv.com).

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**About Youth Services System, Inc.:**

*Youth Services System, Inc.’s mission is “to create better futures for children, families and our community.” YSS is committed to responding to the complex needs of youth at serious risk. Since 1974, Youth Services System, Inc. has reached thousands of youth and their families with our shelter, residential, community-based and professional services. Together with youth and their families, we work to improve their physical and emotional well-being, to address the debilitating effects of abuse, substance use, and trauma, and to build the skills and connections they need to be successful. Accredited by CARF International, YSS is supported by our volunteer Board of Directors, dedicated staff and faithful community, allowing us to make a measurable impact in the lives of youth. For more information, visit www.youthservicessystem.org.*