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College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI)



Jon Strickland



College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services



Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) is a partnership between Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services/OhioMeansJobs, the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Great Oaks Career Campuses and Mount St. Joseph University.

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For more information, or to complete a mentor application, go to:
www.hementors.org

To donate to the HEMI Scholarship Fund, go to:
www.uc.edu/cechpass/hemi.html

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MOUNT ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY



Need for HEMI

Foster youth often face challenging life circumstances while being moved in and out of homes during their lives. Not all foster youth are placed with families when they turn 16; some live in group homes and other live in independent living apartments. For many foster youth, post-secondary education or training is never or rarely discussed or encouraged as an opportunity beyond high school.

National and local statistics for foster children who turn 18 and “age out” of the system are not encouraging. Below are some outcomes for Ohio foster youth at age 19*:

- 14% had a child
- 24% worked part-time; 12% worked full-time
- 26% experienced homelessness within the last two years
- 36% were incarcerated
- 53% had not completed high school/earned GED

*National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), 2013 Ohio Data

Nationally, more than 80% of youth in foster care express a desire to attend college, but only a small percentage go on to earn a bachelor's degree.



HEMI History

In January 2009, Hamilton County Job and Family Services (HCJFS) Director Moira Weir approached the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners and presented the challenge that there is no formal program in place to encourage and inform our foster youth about the pursuit of education and career training beyond high school.

The board agreed that there was more than could be done for this vulnerable population. Looking for a partner in the education community, Hamilton County reached out to the University of Cincinnati. Representatives from the university expressed interest in learning more about the challenge and the possibility of UC joining the county in a community partnership to tackle the issue of post-secondary educational opportunities for foster youth.

Within weeks, Hamilton County and University of Cincinnati representatives joined together to design and implement the HEMI program. These representatives reached out to other partners in the area who readily agreed to be part of the collaboration.

Since 2009, nearly 100% of HEMI students have graduated from high school, and approximately 75% have enrolled in higher education. HEMI has celebrated seven students who graduated from post-secondary institutions.

HEMI is funded by several organizations who believe in the program's mission, including Hamilton County Job & Family Services, the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, University of Cincinnati, Insured Success, AT&T, Inc., the Elsa Sule Trust, and numerous private donors.

HEMI Mission

HEMI provides Hamilton County foster youth a long-term academic mentoring relationship that begins in high school and is focused on awareness of, and preparation for, and completion of post-secondary education and training.

HEMI Defined

HEMI seeks to help prepare foster children for post-secondary education and training. The HEMI program recruits, trains and supports mentors to establish positive long-term relationships with foster youth. HEMI mentors assist, encourage and support student academic achievement through high school and help create a direct pathway to education and career training opportunities after high school graduation.

HEMI mentors are community volunteers who serve as long-term educational consultants providing support to youth on post-secondary opportunities.

HEMI is an award-winning program that has been locally and nationally recognized.



HEMI mentee Jaleshia Brown accepts her scholarship during the 2014 HEMI Celebration Dinner. Brown is pictured with (from left to right) Moira Weir, Hamilton County Job & Family Services Director; Mark Romito, AT&T, Inc.; Dean Larry Johnson, University of Cincinnati College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services; her HEMI mentor, Lee Armstrong; and Greg Vehr, Vice President of Governmental Relations and University Communications, University of Cincinnati.

HEMI's annual fundraiser, "Run for the Roses: Kentucky Derby Fundraiser," raises money for the HEMI Scholarship Fund; all donations go directly to HEMI students in the form of scholarships for post-secondary programs. HEMI has awarded more than \$200,000 in scholarships since 2010.

How Would a Student Benefit from a Mentor?

Student participants in the HEMI program will be provided with guidance and assistance in the following ways:

- Exploring Post-Secondary Education and/or Career Training Options
- ACT/SAT Preparation
- College Tours/Applications
- Financial Aid Opportunities (FAFSA, ETV)
- Scholarship Opportunities
- Resume Building



“Kate Livingston (HEMI mentor) and the HEMI program taught me to believe in myself and never give up. They have supported every decision I wanted to make both educationally and personally. Having their unwavering support motivated me to continue my education (and graduate) despite having two children during the process. Because of them I am successful and living the life of my dreams. Thank you Kate and HEMI for always being there in my time of need.”

Mariah Maxwell
HEMI Mentee

“HEMI provides opportunity and hope for young people who might otherwise find themselves on the streets. While going to college may not be for everyone, it should be an option for everyone. Through volunteer mentors, HEMI helps provide an option that can change a life.”

– **Greg Vehr**, Vice President for Governmental Relations & University Communications, University of Cincinnati

“Having a solid education is one of the critical components to having a successful life. HEMI has been incredibly successful in helping to ensure that students graduate from high school and continue to secondary education to enable these students to have the skills needed to have a great life.”

– **Larry Johnson**, Dean of the College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services College at the University of Cincinnati

“The HEMI program opens a door that many of our foster children thought closed long ago. Turning 18 without a family support system – it is difficult enough to survive, let alone pursue higher education. When a mentor sits down and explains how post-secondary education or training does not have to be a dream, and that it can be a reality, you see the youths' eyes light up and the hope spread across their faces. This is their chance to make it.”

– **Moira Weir**, Director of Hamilton County Job & Family Services

“HEMI's success is due to our selfless mentors who have volunteered their time to help our foster youth achieve their dreams, as well as our great partners that have dedicated time, resources and efforts to achieve better outcomes for the foster students in Hamilton County. Our community is so fortunate to have this type of enthusiasm and commitment to support Hamilton County's at-risk youth in getting started on a path to sustainable employment, education and training.”

– **Greg Hartmann**, HEMI co-founder and former Hamilton County Commissioner