

The HEMI Herald

*The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative
Newsletter*

Fall 2009

November

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HEMI Defined

The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) is a Partnership between Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services and the University of Cincinnati. HEMI seeks to help prepare foster children for post-secondary education. The program will recruit, train and support mentors to establish long term, positive relationships with foster care youth. The mentors will assist, encourage and support academic achievement through high school and help create a direct pathway to higher education.

The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative is designed to serve approximately 25 students in high school for the 2009-2010 school year. Mentees are students in foster care who may live with a foster family, in a group home, or have an apartment through Independent Living, all of whom are cared for by Hamilton County. The students attend various schools across Hamilton County in the greater Cincinnati area and are referred to this program by County section chiefs and case workers.

The mentors and students meet in the community for an average of two hours of contact per week for the duration of the student's high school education and throughout the student's chosen post secondary educational program. HEMI provides mentors and students with support and guidance throughout the relationship.



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HEMI History

Not long after Commissioner Greg Hartmann took office in January of 2009, Hamilton County Job and Family Services (HCJFS) Director, Moira Weir, presented the challenge that there is no formal program in place to encourage and inform our foster youth about the pursuit of education beyond high school.

Commissioner Hartmann agreed that there was more that could be done for this vulnerable population. Looking for a partner in the education community, he reached out to the University of Cincinnati (UC) through the Vice President of Government Relations and Communications, Greg Vehr. Vice President Vehr 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, representatives from UC College of Education, Criminal Justice & Human Resources (CECH) and the School of Social Work, joined together with Commissioner Hartmann's office and HCJFS to design and implement the HEMI program.

-Kristen Kameen, Director of Communications, Commissioner Greg Hartmann



SHARE YOUR NEWS!
Send in your stories
about your mentoring
experience.

Call (513) 556-4368 or
send your news via email
to the HEMI Program
Coordinator,
annie.dick@uc.edu.

We want to feature you!

From a Mentor:

"He appears to be a kind person with a desire to help himself. I know this journey will be very rewarding for both of us."

HEMI in Progress

- Since July 1st, 25 mentors have been recruited, interviewed, and trained.
- The mentors are a diverse group of people from various professions. The mentors learned about HEMI through E-Currents, the Enquirer and by way of others in the community.
- The Partnership has hosted four one hour information sessions at the University of Cincinnati and at the County Administration building to offer information about the HEMI program and how to become involved as a mentor.
- Mentors went through an interview process which involved a series of questions and were filmed for one minute to discuss their interest in becoming a mentor. The video clips were compiled onto a DVD, and then distributed to the identified foster youth's caseworker. The caseworker identified three mentors they thought would work best with their students and matched accordingly.
- Mentors have committed to work one-on-one with a foster youth. Many of these students are to be emancipated from Hamilton County's care. Currently the 25 HEMI students include some juniors, seniors and three recent high school graduates.
- Mentors are expected to work with their mentee for up to six years. This time frame will include working with a student through graduation and through the student's chosen form of postsecondary education or training.
- The mentors attended an initial six hour training which included a panel of former foster youth and an overview of the child welfare system, the population of youth, mentoring procedures, and access to post secondary education.
- October 1st was the first 'Meet and Greet.' This event provided the opportunity for mentors to meet their student, the student's caseworker and in some cases their foster family. Since October 1st, the mentors have been meeting with their students weekly.
- Each month there will be an additional training session on various topics to help best prepare current mentors to work with foster youth. Additionally, each month a mentor support group is hosted by the Program Coordinator, UC School of Social Work faculty and by a representative from Job and Family Services. The support group provides an opportunity for mentors to address any concerns they may have and to provide a place for them to process their experiences and find support.
- The mentors have embraced this opportunity and have successfully engaged the youth with whom they are working.

A Special Recognition

A Special Thanks to the Current HEMI Mentors...

Alan Schwartz, Amit Ghosh, Chantelle Cunningham, Cheryl Dean, Cheryl Van Houten, Greg Smith, John Spille, Jane Kelley, Jasmine Salem, Jeff Demaree, Joe Aaron, Joseph Nickel, Kara Graham, Kate Livingston, Lorrie Jenkins, Lottie Burnette, Melanie Moon, Melissa Luttmann, Monica McCullough, Peggy Feirstine, Rudy Forsberg, Sandra Urquhart, Susan Marcus, Valerie Bairnsfather and Wanda Jones.

From the Perspective of the Program Coordinator

The Program's Progress at a Glance

The past month has been about connecting. While some have patiently awaited initial introductions, others have been meeting-finding common ground, discovering strengths and learning how to connect. The lessons that we are learning involve building relationships, inspiring growth and approaching incremental change. We are learning when to step back, when to ask questions, where to look for solutions and when to seek support.

–Annie Dick, HEMI Program Coordinator



A Story of Success

Rudy Forsberg, a Network Support Specialist for Time Warner Cable has volunteered his time to support and work as a mentor with HEMI student, T. On October 1, 2009 Rudy and T met for the first time, at the 'Meet & Greet,' a hosted event in which mentors and students had an opportunity to introduce themselves. Since October 1st, Rudy and T have met weekly at the North Central Regional Library to explore educational opportunities and life goals.

T is a highly motivated high school senior that recently received several awards for his academic and athletic achievement.

I was given the pleasure of sitting down with Rudy and T to discuss their journey.

Question: What comes to mind when you think of a mentor.

Rudy: A coach.

T: Someone to help you with your future and plans.

Question: What do you hope to accomplish together?

T: Visiting EKV (Eastern Kentucky University) for criminal justice. I'd like to play ball in college.

Question: How do you spend your time together?

T: We talk about college, criminal justice, football, high school, my grades, the ACT test, and the NCAA Clearinghouse. We talk about a lot of things.

Question: What do you hope to gain from being a mentor and/ or having a mentor?

T: Information; To talk to others.

Rudy: To build a relationship. T is very respectful. I'm very pleased with what I've seen so far. T is well respected at his school.

Question: What have you learned about each other? What do you have in common?

Rudy: We're both Pittsburgh Steelers fans and we both played football on the defensive line.

Also, I used to be a cop and he wants to be a cop. (T agreed).

T: We both stay in Mt. Healthy

Question: Why do you want to be a cop?

T: Mr. Rudy was telling me that by being a cop, you see a lot. I've thought about being a fire-fighter or a cop- one or the other.

Question: How do you feel about working together?

T: It's cool. It's going good. At first, I had second thoughts; I wasn't trying to get close to anyone else. I wasn't used to getting help from other people. I would have appreciated getting to work with Mr. Rudy earlier since it's my last year of high school.

Rudy: It's going super. This whole thing is long overdue. I wish it would have started at an earlier age. I've been very fortunate. I'm his advocate.

-Annie Dick, HEMI Program Coordinator

From a Mentor:

"He has a strong-willed and determined foster family who is really invested in his success."

From a Mentor:

"I can matter to her."

From a Mentor:

"This was a program I could do, to make a difference to one student, now."

Calendar of Upcoming Events for 'CURRENT' Mentors

Thursday, December 3, 2009:

6:00-8:00 PM HEMI Mentor Training:

Location: First Christian Assembly of God

220 William Howard Taft, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Monday, December 14, 2009:

7:00-8:30PM HEMI Mentor Support Group

Location: Crossroads

3500 Madison Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45209

Thursday, January 7, 2010:

6:00-8:00 PM HEMI Mentor Training:

Location: First Christian Assembly of God

220 William Howard Taft, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Monday, January 11, 2010:

7:00-8:30PM HEMI Mentor Support Group

Location: Crossroads

3500 Madison Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45209



Want to become a Mentor? Sign up for our next 'NEW' Mentor Training with the HEMI Program Coordinator!

Attend a full day training on January 23, 2010 OR a two-part series on February 2, 2010 & February 4, 2010.

Get Involved with HEMI

- Become a Mentor
- Invite a student to shadow you
- Lend your skills, time or talents
- Serve on a Committee:
 - ~Event Planning
 - ~HEMI Newsletter
 - ~Fundraising
 - ~Training
- Find or provide tutoring opportunities for students

For More Information, Contact: HEMI Program Coordinator

Annie Dick, MSW
CECH PASS
PO Box 210002
Cincinnati, Ohio 45221-0002

Phone: 513-556-4368
Fax: 513-556-1037
E-mail: annie.dick@uc.edu

Acknowledgements

"We wouldn't be where we are today without ...

the individuals who have volunteered as mentors and those who have volunteered their organization's time, efforts and resources are truly appreciated. Their enthusiasm to support our foster youth in getting started on a path to sustainable employment and independent living through education, is contagious and inspiring.

This goes to show that at a time when many people are experiencing personal hardships, there is still a spirit of giving alive and well in our community."

-Greg Hartmann, Hamilton County Commissioner



OUR MISSION:

The Higher Education Mentoring Initiative (HEMI) provides Hamilton County youth a long term academic mentoring relationship that begins in high school and is focused on awareness of, and preparation for, post-secondary education and training.

