

2009 Founders' Dinner Theme

Do you believe in magic?

By Canice Johnson, RSM, Board Member

Plans are underway for a delightful Student Mentor Partners Founders' Dinner, using the theme "Do you believe in magic?" Yes, there will be an ingenious magician in the room, inviting dinner attendees to enjoy his conjuring of wonders. Do come and engage in the fun.

But there is another reason that our theme is "Do you believe in magic?" There is a magical quality to the work of Student Mentor Partners, and that quality will be evident in our celebration of the nine 2009 SMP graduates. A kind of alchemy is created when staff, mentors, parents, partner high schools, foundations, individual and business donors, cultural and sporting venues collaborate, forming a very special, **wonder**-full mix for our students as they stretch and grow through their years of high school. Our students come to understand that success is expected of them, and the positive prophecy becomes self-fulfilling. The effect is near magical!

We will hear from students who began hopeful but unsure of themselves, now poised and confident, feet on the ground, ready to step into college, into society, into adult life. These students have experienced the caring support of mentors who find joy in reaching out to others and we expect that

they will follow this path in the future.

The 2009 Founders' Dinner will be held on Thursday, May 21, at 6:30 p.m. at the ARK, a lovely dining facility connected with St. Ambrose Church in Grosse Pointe Park. Besides a delicious dinner, there will be a silent auction of gifts donated by individuals and businesses who embrace the mission of SMP with youth.

There are many ways in which our readers can help with the Founders' Dinner, SMP's major fundraiser of the year. You or your business can become a dinner sponsor, at whatever level is comfortable for you. You can buy a table or even a few dinner tickets. We are seeking additional items for the silent auction. Please call 586-445-6295 for more information on sponsoring or contributing.

Fox Creek Underground will perform at the SMP Founders' Dinner May 21. Call 586-445-6295 for tickets.



'Review & Renew' Engages Community

A dozen community leaders came together for a Saturday morning of reflection and sharing regarding Student Mentor Partners' mission, program and plans for the future. Called "Review and Renew," the group gave suggestions regarding SMP's plans for Board development and fund development, for increasing the number of students and mentors in the program (the 50/100 Plan), and for marketing. The Board of Directors is grateful for all community input.

Besides giving of their time on a Saturday morning, some of the "R & R" participants are becoming involved in other ways, such as helping with the Founders' Dinner and becoming a mentor.

SMP staff and Board are grateful to all the Review and Renew participants for their time and interest.

How You Can Help SMP

- Tell your friends about SMP.
- Purchase a table or a ticket for the May 21 dinner.
- Volunteer as a mentor for an SMP student or in other ways.
- Make a donation: visit our website www.studentmentorpartners.org and click the "Donate" link.

For any of the above, call 586-445-6295.

SMP Partner High Schools

Bishop Foley, Madison Heights
St. Frances Cabrini, Allen Park
Covenant, Redford
DeLaSalle Collegiate, Warren
Detroit Cristo Rey, Detroit
Detroit Urban Lutheran, Detroit
Loyola, Detroit
Mercy, Farmington Hills
Regina, Warren
Shrine, Royal Oak
U of D Jesuit, Detroit

Executive Director's Corner



Tom Sklut

Congratulations, graduates of 2009! It takes a village. And our village includes students and their families, graduates and their families, board members, mentors, schools, funding organizations and a host of others from an ever-widening circle of friends and supporters.

Seventy-eight lives and counting. With the help of our village, we have changed the lives of 78

men and women who are (or very soon will be) in the world, prepared to make positive change!

The local and global villages are under extreme financial stress. We will continue to be in this situation for the foreseeable future.

How will Student Mentor Partners continue? It is an open question. We keep looking for the answer. We have requested grant funding and are working with corporations and individuals, asking for their help to fund this important work.

What do we say to those students who need our help to continue their education? "Sorry, you came to us at a time when the community was in extreme financial stress. We don't have the resources to help you..."?

The work of SMP is so very important to the students and families we serve. If you have the financial capacity to help or if you can volunteer, please do. It is crucially important to the future of our organization and our village.

* * * *

As for me, after serving as a development consultant and then Interim Executive Director at SMP, I have accepted the role of Director of Advancement at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills. Our daughter graduated from there and I have served on the Development Committee and on their Board of Directors. One of SMP's partner schools, it is a wonderful educational organization, providing young women with powerful leadership and educational opportunities. I will miss working with Student Mentor Partners.

I introduce you to our new Executive Director, Janet Eckhoff. Janet comes to us with an MBA from Michigan State University and 27 years of executive background in the automotive industry as well as a history of volunteer leadership in non-profits. She was introduced to SMP at our Review and Renew program in January and it was love at first sight.

Please call Janet to offer a word of welcome and support. She will be an excellent leader for SMP.



Janet Eckhoff

I look forward to seeing you at the Founders' Dinner, May 21. —Tom



Nicole Dobbins (right) with her mentee, Chanel Pope, at the Mentor of the Year celebration.

SMP Seeks Donations to Support Aggressive 50/100 Plan

SMP has set an aggressive goal to increase the number of its students to 50 in the 2009-2010 school year and to 100 in the 2010-2011 school year. To reach its fall goal, SMP is seeking contributions from foundations and individual donors to support the program expansion.

Called the “50/100 Plan,” the new goal is in response to the high rate of school dropout in the Detroit Public Schools, where only about 30% are graduating.

Research has shown that students who have a long-term mentor and are able to attend a small private school are much more likely than other youth to graduate from high school. Participation in SMP propels students toward:

Destination Graduation.

SMP provides partial tuition support to families who need financial assistance to send their children to one of SMP’s partner schools and whose likelihood of graduating from high school is greatly enhanced by having a long-term mentor.

Nicole Dobbins Honored as Mentor of the Year

By Candace Zann, SMP Volunteer

Her philosophy is: “If you just try to be a role model to one person – he or she will then go on to touch the lives of others.” And that describes why Nicole Dobbins, nominated by her mentee, was selected as Student Mentor Partners’ Mentor of the Year for 2009. Nicole was honored at the Millennium Theater on January 22, 2009 along with fellow mentors representing the other Metro Detroit Mentor Collaboration organizations.

Nicole has worked with young women as a mentor for the last nine years. Her interest in helping teens began with her young cousins. She noticed that they wanted someone closer to their age to relate to, and she always tried to be there for them. That awareness of the needs of others translated into active and focused mentoring while she was a student at Wayne State University. Nicole signed up with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and started mentoring a junior high student. That relationship has continued and her “little sister” is now a college junior.

Nicole graduated from Wayne State University in 2002 with a degree in communications and broadcast journalism. She has worked in the marketing field ever since graduation and has enjoyed representing the auto industry as a product specialist.

Because of her career in marketing, Nicole is “always busy.” Yet she believes that people will make time for the things that are important in life. Since she started mentoring while she was still a college student, she didn’t have money to spend on her mentee, but she could always find time to listen, to talk, to visit, and to support. She discovered that investing even a small amount of time could make a difference in someone else’s life.

When Nicole discovered Student Mentor Partners, she thought it was a wonderful way to connect and make a difference. Through Student Mentor Partners, she has mentored Chanel Pope for three years and they have become “friends and family” to one another. In fact, their relationship was so strong and stable that even though Nicole needed to travel to another locale for nine months for her job, Chanel decided to remain in their partnership and communicate via phone, email and phone texting until Nicole returned.

Chanel, who attends Detroit Urban Lutheran High School, had this to say about her mentor Nicole: “She is by far the best role model anyone in life could look up to or ask for.”

Lynn Pope, Chanel’s mother, shared, “Nicole is awesome! She is always there for Chanel and helps in any way she can. Nicole is committed to being a great role model for my daughter. She’s an all-around great individual.”

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Student Mentor Partners



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Dobbins, continued from p. 3

When asked what she would say to someone who is considering becoming a mentor, Nicole replied, "Just go ahead and do it. You can influence someone's life. Don't hesitate. I have gained so much from being a mentor. It makes you a better person, and you realize you can learn from anyone."

Nicole is an avid sports fan, and loves to travel. Her newest avocation is "trying to do some gourmet cooking." She loves to watch the Food Network and learn from the professionals. SMP looks forward to sampling some of her culinary efforts in the near future!

New Student Applications
SMP is accepting applications from students who will be freshmen or sophomores for the 2009 - 2010 school year. Call 586-445-6295 for more information. Tell your friends and neighbors.

Holy Mentor
More than books, classes and exams
Better than years of courses and degrees
Youth need and appreciate someone older
Willing to take the time to teach
By example no less than word.
One who listens without judgment
And hears without disdain
Whose gentle guidance employs neither guilt nor fear
And who regards each fault or failure
Not with disappointment, ridicule, anger or hurt
But with that rare compassion that flows
From knowing an invaluable, albeit painful, lesson has been learned.
How best to survive—no—thrive in a less than perfect world
And forgive, yield, succeed or totally botch things up
With equal grace and dignity.
Regarding the world with wonder
And people with utmost respect
Teaching along the way, almost by chance,
This most precious, sublime and—yes—holy of life's lessons:
How to be truly, fully, human
Without embarrassment or excuse
Imitating, perhaps unknowingly, the One who came
Lived, died and rose again
As mentor to us all
And in so doing saved the world.
—From July 08 Maryknoll Magazine, by Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.