Making CONNECTIONS

Sycamore native’s program tries to bust stereotypes

By DAVE MANN
Staff Writer

CHICAGO — When Dan Bas-ill left Sycamore 30 years ago, he had no idea he would leave a successful career in advertising to run a program in Chicago, helping kids living in the Cabrini Green housing project.

Bas-ill co-founded Cabrini Connections, an after-school tutoring and mentoring program, in 1992. Inter-estingly, Cabrini Green is assigned an adult volunteer, who helps them with their schoolwork and life, simply, someone to hang out with.

The roots of Bas-ill’s efforts to help others began while he was in college, studying history, after he graduated from Sycamore High School in 1966.

“Sycamore is not a very academically oriented town, and I lived in one of the small houses on Main Street,” he said. “I was just one of the kids, you know. The kids in the community were all very close, and we actually had a very strong community in Sycamore.”

Bas-ill said the program began as a way to give back to the community.

“After graduating from college, I worked in advertising in Chicago. I was always looking for ways to give back to the community, and I thought about doing something related to education,” he said.

The program grew over the years, and now Bas-ill said he has helped more than 1,000 students.

“I started out with one student, and now we have about 150 students that we tutor weekly,” he said.

In the fall of 2016, Bas-ill was named the program’s executive director.

“The program has grown a lot since I first started, and we have a lot of volunteers who help us out,” he said.

Bas-ill said the program has helped students succeed in school and in life.

“Many of our students have gone on to college, and some have even gone on to successful careers,” he said.

The program has received funding from various sources, including the Chicago Public Schools and the Illinois Department of Education.

Bas-ill said he hopes the program will continue to grow and help more students.

“The goal is to help as many students as possible,” he said.

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These kinds of long-distance con-
nections and communication are ex-
actly what is needed to improve the
lives of children, Bas-ill said.

“People move to different areas, and
we need to make sure that they keep in
contact with each other,” he said.

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