Canah Bradley Makes Her Selection

Von Stueben High School senior, Kanah Bradley, who has been in the Cabrini Connections’ program since March of 2009 has made the decision to attend Southern Illinois University this fall! Kanah was researching several colleges and universities, and has decided that Southern Illinois University would be the perfect fit for her to pursue her dreams of a career in medicine.

Kanah and her mentor Autumn Sharp have been working together for nearly two years here in the program, and they also spend time together not in the program. Autumn said this about her student's recent decision to attend SIU, "I am excited to see Kanah graduate and move on to SIU. I think she will do extremely well and we'll see her accomplishing her goal of being a doctor.”

We are not only proud of Kanah and excited about this next step in her life, we are thankful of both Kanah and Autumn. We are looking to create more and more life changing stories and experiences like this one, and we are going to need more and more support from others to help us create these stories. If we can get consistent financial support and resources, we will then be able to keep the center open, filled with a strong leadership of staff and coordinators, that will lead dedicated and committed students and volunteers grow in the program.

Marcus Burks is the second student to be featured in the student spotlight for a second time (Melissa Young). He was originally featured as an 8th grader at Wells Prep in March 2009. Two years later, he is a rising junior at King College Prep. Marcus is from the far south side of Chicago and has four siblings.

He has three younger sisters who “make me feel like a leader” and an older brother who he’s close with. Marcus aims to be a positive influence in his sisters’ lives because “I wouldn’t want to see them doing anything negative.” What personally keeps him going while he’s looking out for others? “Hopes and dreams of going to college,” he says.

As for academics, Marcus’s favorite subject right now is chemistry. He finds it interesting and he benefits from his strength in math. This could prove useful as he considers studying engineering in college.

Marcus is looking to get out of Chicago, though. “I’ve been here too long,” he says. “I want to meet new people.” His first choice is Florida, even though the Miami Heat are his worst enemies at the moment. “If I ever go to Miami, I’m wearing my Bulls gear!” He predicts the Bulls to win in seven games because “We have D. Rose and they don’t.”

This is Marcus’s third full year as a participant at Cabrini Connections. He has been with the same mentor, Joe Fridlin, since 4th grade when they worked together at the YMCA. Joe is a “positive influence… he’s like a big brother… [and] he makes sure I’m on track to be successful.”

Marcus’s tip for mentors is to get to know your student and become friends with him or her. “Let them know that you care and that you’re there for them if they need you,” he says. This will build trust and understanding and lead to a better mentor-mentee relationship.

This summer Marcus plans to continue working (he has a paper route) and having fun. He loves to stay active. He plays pick up basketball and he runs track for school. His motto is: “Just live by the day.” Have a great summer, Marcus, and thanks for making Cabrini Connections an important part of your life!
Tutor/Mentor Connection

Conference Enthusiasm

This week's Tutor/Mentor Conference was attended by nearly 100 people. Lots of positive comments. Three groups already said they want to be part of the next conference. I've many business card to follow up with. Workshops on social media showed how we can connect with each other. Use http://tinyurl.com/TMC-ConfForum to connect in the Tutor/Mentor Forum. Follow up and share ideas on twitter using hash tag. (@TutorMentorConf)

As we move from this conference to the future I encourage readers to read the blog article I wrote in April about changes in the organizational structure of the Tutor/Mentor Connection. I hope you'll reach out with ideas and suggestions so that by July we have a way to generate revenue and a place where we can work and support the involvement of interns and volunteers so we can organize follow up events in 2011-2012.

Role of Leaders - Making Connections

This image(1) shows teens volunteers at a typical Cabrini Connections tutor/mentor. Throughout each school year this program serves as a safe place in non-school hours where volunteers who don't live in poverty, but do have jobs and college degrees, can meet with 7th to 12th grade teens who do live in high poverty neighborhoods. These teens are not surrounded by family and community residents with college educations or who work in business and professional careers. That's what poverty is all about.

These kids also don't have many places in non-school hours where they can use computers and participate in college and career readiness activities, or get extra help with homework. That happens at Cabrini Connections every week.

As Mayor Emanuel's strategic planning teams begin to look at violence, education, safety, workforce development and other issues, we hope they use the maps and other ideas we share to build an understanding of what places in the non-school. hours are connecting youth and volunteers with learning and technology the way we try to at Cabrini Connections. The map(2) is from the Program Locator that the Tutor/Mentor Connection has created. You can zoom into neighborhoods and click on the green stars to get contact information, or even web site links.

While much emphasis is on making schools better by improving teacher and principal quality, I feel a parallel effort must be make to make more and better mentor-rich non-school programs available for k-12 kids in high poverty neighborhoods. Such programs need to be on-going, not project based. Mayor Daley helped set up the AfterSchool Matters program a few years ago and it does a great job of helping existing programs have short term learning programs. However, this does not address the infrastructure needed to make a program a great program, and that would make great non school programs available in every part of the city and suburbs.

Interns interpret T/MC concepts

This graphic was created by Sam Lee, a new intern from IIT working at the Tutor/Mentor Connection this spring. She read this blog article, then created this interpretation and posted it on her blog on the Tutor/Mentor Connection forum. Interns from many colleges and high schools can be doing similar interpretations. As they post them to their own blogs and the T/MC forum we can draw more attention to the ideas and more support to volunteer-based tutor/mentor programs in many cities.

Learn about interns who have worked with Tutor/Mentor Connection since 2006.

Contact the T/MC if you'd like to be involved.