STEPS FOR STARTING AND BUILDING A NEW TUTOR/MENTOR CONNECTION

While many organizations build public awareness for a program, or a group of programs, or offer training and technical assistance, or even organize volunteer recruitment fairs, few do each of these as part of a continuous cycle of capacity building aimed at helping every tutor/mentor program in a city be more effective. And few devote their own resources to raising operating dollars for the programs they seek to help.

The Tutor/Mentor Connection, formed in Chicago in 1993, offers all of these services to tutor/mentor programs in Chicago.

Presented by

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INTRODUCTION

"The Tutor/Mentor Connection (T/MC) may be particularly difficult to understand because it does not easily fit within known categories of organizations. It provides some of the supports that a membership organization or association would -- such as its newsletter, conference, and public relations efforts -- but it doesn’t charge a membership fee or offer a membership identity. It also provides some of the matching services that volunteer associations provide and some of the technical assistance provided by organizations that do training and management consulting, but without the fee sometimes charged by such consultants. Moreover, the T/MC’s citywide mission to not only support programs but to increase their numbers sets it apart from other types of programs."

From "A Case Study of the Tutor/Mentor Connection of Cabrini Connections. An Effort to Build a Supportive Infrastructure for Tutoring and Mentoring Programs in Chicago," A Working Paper written by Amelia Kohm, Chapin Hall Center For Children at the University of Chicago, 1999

to order the report, go to http://www.chapin.uchicago.edu/ProjectsGuide/index.html

In the final chapter of his book "The Kindness of Strangers", Mark Freedman starts with a basic question. He asks, "Will mentoring's inherent appeal be squandered in rhetorical excesses or harnessed in responsible programming--in short, can the movement go to its next stage of operational and organizational development?" He went on in this chapter to say "Mentoring draws our attention to important issues for social policy: how to provide young people with the relationships they so badly need, and how to engage the middle class in addressing poverty problems."

He continues, "a great many disadvantaged youth are in need of support that is developmental, nurturing, protective and extensive in nature--in other words, something resembling supplemental parenting. They need this caring not only to make the basic transition to adulthood, but to survive under conditions of great stress." Finally, he talks about "mentor-rich environments" where a variety of adults establish close ties with young people

Cabrini Connections operates one such program in the Cabrini-Green area of Chicago. Each year for the past six years, a growing number (now more than 100) of adults have served as mentors, tutors, role models, change agents and friends to more than 100 students. They are part of a comprehensive, mentor-rich process aimed at leading each student from 7th grade to a career. We call this program our Kids' Connection. You can read about it at http://chicagotribune.com/link/cabriniconnections.

However, Cabrini Connections has created another role for itself, that of mentoring programs, businesses, faith groups and communities. It has formed the Tutor/Mentor Connection (T/MC) with a vision that every neighborhood of any city should have a variety of great, mentor-rich programs, creating opportunities for thousands of young people to participate, and, as a result, move more successfully through school and to careers. It has extended this vision to one that calls on every city in America to have a full range of mentor-rich programs wherever young people face developmental challenges of poverty, isolation, violence and neglect.

Normally, the presentations the T/MC gives are intended to help individuals, businesses, faith groups and/or communities start or enhance single tutor/mentor programs in different parts of the city. T/MC participates in brainstorming, provides access to models of other programs, research from which to build vision, introduction to dozens of other tutor/mentor program contacts, and critiques vision, structure and program design plan. Then, as a program launches, and begins to mature, the Tutor/Mentor Connection continues as a partner, helping programs sustain and expand there efforts for the generation it takes for a child to become an adult.

The goals of this workshop are broader than that. I hope to show what the Tutor/Mentor Connection is and how it has been created over the past seven years, and how easy its process would be to duplicate in other cities. Our goal is that participants leave the workshop with specific ideas which they can put to work in their own communities, and the motivation which would lead to additional "tutor/mentor connections" by the start of the 2000-2001 school year.
WE MUST FIRST BELIEVE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE,
THEN DEVELOP A STEP-BY-STEP STRATEGY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

There is probably no more critical issue in America today than the education of our kids, and the growing gap between rich and poor because of the huge differences in educational opportunities available to kids in the inner cities and those in more affluent areas. There is probably no greater opportunity to connect people of vastly different backgrounds and to build social capital than through programs which bring diverse groups of people together to help children grow to be more self-sufficient adults.

Cabrini Connections, through its Tutor/Mentor Connection(T/MC) seeks to create an army of tutors, mentors and school-to-work volunteers who become supplemental parents and sources of hope and opportunity in the lives of inner city kids. As these people bond with these children, we seek to educate them to the broader needs of innercity communities, such as jobs, funding for better schools, housing and segregation and empower them as change agents in the communities from which they come. This has the potential to become a powerful political and policy force, which is critical if we are ever to have a government which has the broad-based support it needs to enact, and enforce, legislation which will provide real, effective and broad-reaching long-term help for children born into poverty.

In order for this to happen, we must first believe that it is possible, then develop a step-by-step strategy to make it happen, just as a business sets out to increase market share for a product or service. The T/MC has begun to build this strategy. We invite you to join us, with your ideas, your advocacy and your leadership.

- The goal is not to have one good program, but a city of good programs.
  Chicago and other cities have numerous examples of schools and afterschool programs which achieve great results. The challenge of any city is to duplicate these successes so that children throughout the city can participate in great programs. This is a marketing and distribution problem, not an education problem.

- The T/MC is a learning and opportunity delivery business
  Our goal is that afterschool tutor/mentor programs be available in every neighborhood where kids live in risk due to poverty, violence and poor health access. As business people, we approach our work as a marketing and distribution problem. We understand the need for our services to be available in every neighborhood and for every age range of children—from pre-school through work-placement. Therefore we use state-of-the-art geographic mapping systems to help organizations focus their efforts on single neighborhoods, or groups of neighborhoods, and entire cities. T/MC maps show which neighborhoods of Chicago need tutor/mentor programs and what programs already are operating in those areas. By publishing a Directory of programs, and using radio, print and TV to build public awareness and response, we are working to create a flow of resources (volunteers, ideas, equipment, media attention and dollars) to every program in every neighborhood. This is a reversal of the traditional scurry of non-profits seeking survival support, and more likely to be sustained and long-term, which is critical if programs are to help kids go from first grade to a first job.

- For any tutor/mentor program to be successful we must provide infrastructure
  In The Kindness of Strangers, Marc Freedman talks about the potential and the difficulties of mentoring and suggests that without infrastructure and support for mentors and mentoring programs, the movement will never reach its potential. Mentoring and school-to-work programs can work, but not without considerable effort and time investments. Freedman listed a number of ways mentoring was falling short of its potential:

  - missing infrastructure, poor program models, missing follow-up
  - emphasis on marketing and recruitment instead of program support
  - poor or no coordination, matches made and then abandoned by program
  - conducted in isolation
  - few dollars for operational expenses; few programs with resources to serve mentors as well as mentees
  - missing knowledge regarding effective practices
  - little appreciation of how hard it is to put mentoring into action

"Every Program has the SAME needs"

As a long-term operator of a volunteer based tutor/mentor program the leaders who formed Cabrini Connections and the T/MC know how hard it is to attract and keep volunteers, donors and public visibility. We know how difficult it is to find trainers who would be available when, and where we want them. We know how important computers and the internet can be to our success, yet how hard it is to find or afford modern equipment, software and staff who know how to use them, and how to keep our technology running. We know how much time it takes to build evaluation reports, track progress, etc.
So we've created a public awareness/advertising campaign to draw these resources to hundreds of programs in Chicago who have the same needs we have, using the T/MC Directory and our database of contact information as a resource tool to help potential donors, volunteers and business partners find programs, and using major events and media stories to motivate them to do so.

"We must provide year-round support, year after year"

What makes the T/MC unique is that we focus on each of the steps necessary to build a distribution system of tutor/mentor programs, and have a delivery system which provides appropriate support at different times during the year. We not only recognize the need to share ideas, but we raise the funds to distribute those ideas, through newsletters, conferences, media reports and one-on-one consulting. These steps include a constant cycle of:

- Research - Who are the programs doing tutoring, mentoring work, where are they located, what works, what seems to work, what training is available? These are questions we constantly seek answers for.

- Public Awareness and Communications - Our goal is to develop a message that draws visibility, volunteers and dollars to programs throughout Chicago, with a reach and frequency which extends through suburbia, and continues for more than a generation.

- Resource building - Focusing organizations of people and ideas (from universities, businesses, social, civic, professional organizations) on the individual tutor/mentor programs, groups of programs and the Tutor/Mentor Connection.

- Training and support - Providing choices which help leaders build effective programs with differing resources, and a template/curriculum which teaches leaders to run the business of tutoring and mentoring, and which enables volunteers to be more effective, as tutors and mentors, and as leaders and donors.

"Events which draw resources to programs also create public awareness"

Since May 1994, the T/MC has offered a calendar of events to bring support and visibility to tutor/mentor programs. Each of these events draws considerable media coverage. Each year each of these events increases the number of participants and the responses they generate

- August/September - Volunteer Recruitment Campaign
- November - Leadership Conference
- November -Tutor/Mentor Week and fund raising (with Chicago Bar Foundation)
- Feb./March - Video Festival (a radio campaign at this time would be powerful)
- May - Leadership Conference

Using these events to draw programs together and to draw resources to them, the T/MC has built a library of best practice information and developed a newsletter, a web site (www.tutormentorconnection.org) and a communications system to share strategies, ideas and resources. The April 30/May 1, 1999 T/MC Leadership Conference attracted over 350 participants from Chicago and other midwest cities. The most recent conference was held on November 5th and 6th.

On the following pages the different components of the T/MC action plan are discussed in more detail. However, for the most comprehensive understanding of these events and actions, visit the T/MC web site at www.tutormentorconnection.org. The recruitment campaign, the conference workshop lists, links to other tutor/mentor programs, and maps and charts which further illustrate and build capacity are available to any visitor, from any city, at any time.

**Research**

Our research is business-type market research. We're looking for ideas and information which tutor/mentor program leaders, volunteers, donors and business partners can put to work immediately. In industry we would be known as a "knowledge business". Every conversation generates information which is available for use and sharing in the next conversation.

The key to T/MC research is the database we have been building, formally since 1994, but informally since 1975 when I first became the leader of a tutor/mentor program in Chicago. We're constantly looking for information about "who does this work, where are they located, what works, what training is available, etc. And we're constantly sharing it through our newsletters, web site and conferences.
We spent 1993 comparing our list of Chicago area providers to other existing lists, such as the United Way Blue Book, the Sheriff's Directory of Youth Services, the Yellow Pages telephone directory, and the Metro Chicago Information System's data base. We combined this into one data base, and launched a Survey (see attachment a) in the spring of 1994, asking for confirmation from those we though provided some form of tutoring/mentoring, and for leads to others in the neighborhood who also provide such services.

We compiled the responses into a Directory which we distributed at the first Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference in May of 1994. The Directory received such a positive response that we've continued to update it and distribute it to a growing list every year since then. While the information we provide at this point is brief, and not backed up by any "quality assurance" it provides a "networking" link for anyone looking to be a volunteer, find a program for a child, be a donor, or learn from someone who already is in the business.

As we located programs, we also added "resources" to our data base, newsletter mail list and T/MC Directory. These are university, business, media, etc. who we learned were interested in tutor/mentor issues, provided training, provided dollars, etc. With this data base we were able to begin to distribute the information we were collecting, sharing ideas, motivation and inspiration which others might use to expand their own networks and improve their own programs.

**PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Jonathan Alter asked in a *Newsweek* article following the 1997 Presidents' Summit for America's Future, "will the local press consistently cover how the public and private institutions in their areas are meeting their pledges." His question recognizes the difficulty any non-profit has of building public awareness of their cause, and sustaining it long enough to cut through the many other priorities people have to the point that it generates a flow of volunteers, donors, equipment, etc. to that agency or movement.

No single tutor/mentor program, or organization in the national movement, has the dollars of a McDonald's, a NIKE, or any other major for-profit corporation to advertise regularly for the resources (volunteers, ideas, training, equipment, dollars, etc.) which every single neighborhood program needs to be an effective, ongoing tutor/mentor program.

The T/MC's public awareness strategy creates a) events which draw public media coverage; b) computer generated maps which respond to media headlines and editorials and provide a focus on specific neighborhoods and programs in those neighborhoods; and c) multiple opportunities to speak to the public, via letters-to-editor opportunities and alternative public information channels.

Our media strategy encourages media to interview other programs in other neighborhoods of Chicago, while focusing from one T/MC event to the next. For instance, during this 1999 volunteer recruitment campaign a volunteer and student from the local Big Brother/Big Sister program were featured in the main press conference held on September 10th, while another program was featured in the live radio broadcast held at one of the volunteer fair sites. And while the press conference the day of the fairs created media attention "because of the fairs", our message was that programs would be looking for volunteers on a year-round basis, and would be looking for "dollars and training" which pointed to the November Conference and Tutor/Mentor Week.

In 1993 the T/MC recruited a local public relations firm, Public Communications, Inc. (www.pcipr.com), to help us develop this strategy, which was launched in January 1994. In the succeeding years, PCI has provided an average of $15,000 per year in pro bono services, matching our own contribution of $12,000 dollars. With this professional help (small in comparison to major corporate public awareness budgets) we have been developing relationships with numerous print, TV and radio reporters in the Chicago market, which results in more media covering our events, and often has reporters calling us for interviews, even when we've not called them.

Since 1994 dozens of print, TV and Radio have been generated by this strategy. Every three months a T/MC event reaches more than 3 million people in the Chicago market with a "be a tutor/mentor, help a tutor/mentor program" message. As we continue to lead this campaign we expect to be joined by more and more organizations, each giving the same message, drawing more volunteers, dollars and visibility to every tutor/mentor program in Chicago.

**Use of Computer Generated Maps.**

The Tutor/Mentor Connection also began to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computerized mapping to plot our data on maps of the city of Chicago. This is one of the most unique parts of the T/MC. Maps...
neighborhoods than in others. Locations of poorly performing schools can be shown on a map, as an overlay, showing the relationship of poverty and poor schools. Locations of shootings can be mapped for anyone to see. Our media and networking message calls on our peers and potential partners to look at the map of Chicago and focus on what we need to do to populate every poverty neighborhood with more effective, and constantly improving programs. By showing which programs already exist in a neighborhood, we can call on those with resources needed by every tutor/mentor program (volunteers, dollars, equipment, training, visibility, etc.) to find programs, while those programs are constantly searching for those same resources.

We begin to research the use of GIS mapping in late 1992. In 1993 we were introduced to the Metro Chicago Information System (MCIC) which was using mapping in reports it produced for the local United Way and various Chicago businesses. MCIC offered to produce our maps at a reduced fee, making it possible for us to focus on collecting and distributing the message, not producing the maps. As we refined this technology in 1994 and 1995 we realized we needed to have the mapping capacity in-house, because producing a map which would tell a specific message required a "constant tinkering" which was not very timely when working with an outside consulting firm. We contacted a local university (Northern Illinois University (NIU)) for help in transferring the GIS system from MCIC to our own computers. We obtained a donation of software from Environmental Research Systems, Inc. (ESRI) and we obtained two new computers from IBM. With this combination of resources we were able to get a graduate student team from NIU to do the map conversion in early January 1996 and we hired one of the students to be our GIS person following that.

Since 1996 we have developed a library of maps, some showing business locations in the city, some showing churches and hospitals, and some showing the various resources in individual neighborhoods. We've developed many maps which follow media stories about kids being killed. Our map shows the site and the neighborhood one mile around the site. It shows what, if any, tutor/mentor programs are in that area, and what business, churches, hospitals, etc. are also there who could be a support system for tutor/mentor programs. With each map we produce a list, showing the name and address of each of these organizations, which anyone can use to call a meeting, offer a donation, or get more involved.

While we've sent these maps frequently to the local media, they are seldom used, so we've begun to build the capacity to put these maps on our web site, so people could go there to get this neighborhood analysis. Samples of our use of maps can be seen on the T/MC web site. With these examples, we believe a local community could approach local GIS users for help in their own mapping.

Letters to Editor, community publishing, alternative media.

While getting stories about tutoring/mentoring in the major Chicago newspapers is great, we've recognized that this is unreliable as a regular means of public awareness building. Thus we've opened other channels for reaching the public

- Letters to the Editor...we regularly watch what stories the media features, and send commentary relating to those stories and to mentoring in Chicago. The major papers now have on-line versions and we not only can write our letters regularly to various columnist, we can post our messages in on-line discussion groups

- Cable TV ... Chicago Access TV supports the annual volunteer recruitment campaign with a special listing of multiple tutor/mentor programs provided by the T/MC. This medium is also used to support the Leadership Conferences. More than 4000 inquiries were logged by potential volunteers during the 1998 and 1999 volunteer recruitment campaigns.

- Business web sites ... like any non-profit, we have our own circle of directors, funders, volunteers and supporters. Several of these are now using their own web sites to endorse tutoring and mentoring and to create traffic for our web site. Here are examples:
  
  www.lightfall.com
  www.amphionpro.com
  www.chicagobar.org/public/lendahand
  http://jordan-webb.net/tmc.html

- Faith Groups ...we work with various interfaith networks who are also promoting mentoring, with a goal that four times each year (each time prior to a T/MC event) a message will appear in the church bulletin which calls on members of the congregation to support local mentoring programs, and to redistribute the message from the church bulletin in their company, alumni or professional organization's newsletter.
• The Internet ... as expect the Internet to becomes a powerful force for advocacy, recruitment and information sharing. W participate in local and national discussion groups, and work actively to link our web site is with web sites of other organization's from around the world. We are averaging about 1000 visits per month to our site (www.tutormentorconnection.org) and have had nearly 14,000 visits since August 20, 1998.

RESOURCES BUILDING/EVENTS

Our public awareness strategy and our resource building strategy work together. We target two groups with our message. The first are leaders and volunteers of tutor/mentor programs. Our goal is to provide information and inspiration which local leaders would put to work to constantly improve the quality of their own programs. The second are those who have resources which could help local programs improve. These include volunteers, dollars, ideas, equipment, computers, training, etc.

By publishing a Directory listing hundreds of program locations and contact information, and by providing maps which show where the need is greatest, what program are in an area, and what churches, hospitals, universities, businesses, etc. are in the same area, we can call on providers of these various resources to use their own marketing to generate a flow of needed resources directly to local program site.

We've created events which provide direct service to programs, and which create public awareness, reminders and motivation for "resource providers" to reach out to these programs with offers of help. Our events are tied to the school-year calendar and each event creates momentum toward the following event. Each event started small, as an idea, and has improved each year as more and more programs have joined with us. Here is our schedule:

- August/September - Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

The first campaign was held in August/September 1995. About thirty programs participated. We had four locations, but we generated several print and TV stories. We also were able to start a partnership with Chicago Access TV (cable) which agreed to use a call-in bulletin board (CAN TV 42) to post listings for individual tutor/mentor programs supplied through the T/MC.

The fifth campaign just ended. Eighty four programs participated at 18 different recruitment fair sites in Chicago an in surrounding suburbs. Media coverage reached more than 3 million people with multiple stories. Judges visited churches with "be a mentor" recruitment messages. And the campaign was endorsed by Governor George Ryan the Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, actor Joe Mantegna, the head of the Chicago Public Schools, a congressman, and dozens of Chicago tutor/mentor program leaders.

Volunteer fair sites were libraries, public office buildings, Borders Books & Music Stores, etc. Our goal has been to find places where the traffic of potential volunteers is high, where two or more programs can set out materials which can give a volunteer choices and motivation. By massing so many sites and so many programs we've been able to generate more public awareness, which enhances the volunteer recruitment efforts of individual programs, whether they participate in the campaign or not. Leading up the campaign we do radio interviews, issue press releases and PSA's, and mail the Tutor/Mentor Directory to more than 2000 business, churches, hospitals, libraries and schools, encouraging on-going volunteer recruitment efforts from those organizations. A detailed Volunteer Recruitment Campaign report is posted on the T/MC web site.

- November - Leadership Conference

Following the fall recruitment period, the goal of any program is to keep these volunteers for as long as possible, help them be more effective tutors and mentors, and convert some of them to leaders. The T/MC organizes a conference in November and again in May to help programs do this.

While the first leadership conference held in May of 1994 was only attended by 70 people, the past three conferences have each been attended by nearly 300 people. The conference format is simple. Find a place to gather. Find people who will share what they do and how they do it. Keep the cost low, with speakers and leaders volunteering time to organize the event. Invite people from the data base to attend, and people will come. The second conference, held in November 1994 was attended by 200 people. We've continued a November/May schedule every year since then. Workshops offered at the conference are posted at www.tutormentorconnection.org.

The timing of the conferences is strategic. We know that individual tutor/mentor programs are busy screening, matching, training and orientating their own volunteers during September and October. That means an effort by the T/MC to do citywide training during this period would clash with several local program agendas. Therefore, our conference is timed for the first or second week of November, after the first waive of volunteers have been
ideas of what to do each week with their students. Therefore, the timing of the conference is ideal for program leaders and volunteers to get together and share ideas which can be put to use over the next few months to help each program.

- **November -Tutor/Mentor Week and fund raising (with Chicago Bar Foundation)**

The timing of the November Conference is also a good time to build renewed recognition for tutor/mentor programs, and to call on donors to consider funding tutor/mentor programs in year-in giving plans. So as we developed a public awareness campaign to attract participants to the first conference, we expanded this into a Tutor/Mentor Week campaign to bring attention to the mentoring movement in Chicago.

As we developed a media campaign for the first conference, we were contacted by the Chicago Bar Foundation to distribute a nomination form for a "mentoring" award which they were sponsoring. They were having trouble finding people to send the application to because up to that point, there was no comprehensive database of Chicago's tutor/mentor programs. They recognized that we were publishing a directory and gathering mentoring leaders and asked if we would distribute the nomination form. We followed that with another conversation a few weeks later, saying, "Now that you've your toe into funding the mentoring movement, why not be the first foundation which raises money intended for the on-going general operations of one-on-one tutor/mentor programs throughout Chicago? They agreed, and by the end of June 1994, we had a strategy of building a public awareness week around the November conference, with the Bar Association taking the lead.

The goal of the Tutor/Mentor Week is to generate new attention to tutor/mentor programs in neighborhoods throughout the city, to reinforce volunteers and students who had already joined many of these programs via the fall volunteer recruitment, to recruit additional volunteers and to raise dollars for the Lend A Hand Fund at the Chicago Bar Foundation. It is also intended to build a larger public awareness of the mentoring movement six weeks before the year-end holidays and year-end tax time. By building greater public awareness in November, the T/MC is attempting to enhance every single tutor/mentor program's ability to raise year-end dollars from their own fund raising events and direct mail campaigns.

The Tutor/Mentor Week is still developing. For each of the past five years, we've succeeded in getting the Mayor to proclaim the week surrounding the conference as Tutor/Mentor Week in Chicago. Each year volunteers from the CBA have become more active in the fund raising effort. For the past three years a fund raising benefit (held on Saturday, November 6th this year), has raised visibility and dollars. Since 1995 the Lend A Hand Program has raised more than $250,000 which has been distributed to tutor/mentor programs in the city. We see the potential for legal and professional associations in other cities to duplicate this effort, while adding other professional groups to the Lend A Hand group in Chicago. Visit the CBA web site at www.chicagobar.org/public/lendahand

- **Feb./March - Video Festival (a radio campaign at this time would be powerful)**

By the middle of February in Chicago it is cold and it is dark when volunteers leave work and head to their mentoring. The reality that "mentoring is hard work, and that kids don't always smile, or show up, or even progress forward all the time" is setting in on the volunteers recruited in the fall. Programs are struggling to keep their volunteer base up, and some are beginning to look to how they will make the program better during the following year. This is the ideal time to be back in front of the media with a major event intended to reinforce existing volunteers, recruit new volunteers, and show volunteers how they can go beyond working one-on-one with a child to becoming a leader and quality improvement agent in a program.

While we've had a radio call-in format on the drawing board for several years, our Kids' Connection volunteers have partially filled this void. They created a video production company within the tutor/mentor program we operate and an annual Video Festival to showcase the work the kids and volunteers have created. By placing this event in late February it has created a "talk to the media/talk to the public" opportunity which has proven very successful. Each year our students create videos, working with teams of volunteers. Some of these talk about mentoring, the work at Cabrini Connections, and the need for volunteers to duplicate programs like this in other neighborhoods. The video screening creates interview opportunities for the kids, and our web site provides another outlet for people to see and respond to this message. It's a great format for engaging kids and teaching them how to call for help using advanced communication tools which entertain at the same time (see www.jellyvision.com/typ).

- **May - Leadership Conference**

The Tutor/Mentor Connection holds a second leadership conference in May, while there are still six weeks left in the school year. Our purpose is to gather and share ideas to build up motivation and programs of mentoring...
and to inspire programs to use these ideas over the summer to make their programs better as they repeat the cycle in the following year. During the conference the Lend A Hand Grants are distributed as part of a "best practice format." Last year funds from the Lend A Hand program were also used to provide $1,000 awards to programs who submitted descriptions of how they recruit volunteers, how they train volunteers, and how they communicate the needs and opportunities of their organization. These are key competencies of any tutor/mentor program and encouraging the circulation of "what works" is key to the T/MC strategy.

The timing of this conference is intended to leave time for program leaders and volunteers to continue to nurture the process of a volunteer going beyond a two-hour a week commitment, to becoming part of a program committee which might put these ideas to work. Few tutor/mentor programs have enough staff to do everything needed to operate a program. Converting volunteers into workers and leaders who will reach back to their company/university/friend-base to bring more help to improve a program is absolutely essential in any local program. The informal contact a program leader has with a volunteer during weekly site-based mentoring sessions offers an ideal opportunity to informally share vision statements and nurture a volunteer's willingness to go the extra step to help a program. If a leader waits until after the school year ends and calls a meeting of volunteers to help plan the next year, that leader will often find the meeting poorly attended. However, if the leader has prospected potential volunteer leaders on a year-round basis, the summer meetings not only are better attended, but they become work-meetings, where an energetic volunteer corps is working to help make tutor/mentoring better at that location.

**TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

One of the organizations linked on the Tutor/Mentor Connection web site is The Center For What Works (www.whatworks.org). In the opening pages of their web site they say,

"Taxes are going up and results are going down. An enormous amount of money is spent with little to show for it. The reason stems not from a lack of good ideas about what might work, but from a lack of good information about what does work.

We must strengthen the capacity of existing organizations to address social problems by bringing to bear the full weight of refined knowledge that exists in this area world wide. This is best accomplished through a central networking mechanism, a clearinghouse, that assembles the state-of-the-art information and delivers it to those who fund, review and implement social policies."

This is a premise the T/MC endorses fully, so we don't need to recreate the message, we need to repeat it often enough that more people hear it, understand it and integrate it into their own actions. There are plenty of good ideas, some in formation, some already proven. There is just not enough commitment to find and recirculate these ideas.

At Cabrini Connections, we call our tutoring and mentoring process Total Quality Mentoring (TQM), which is borrowed from a business term, Total Quality Management. We recognize that we must constantly improve our programs, change and refresh our offerings, and find new ways to motivate youth and volunteers to attend, and keep attending week after week, and year after year. Good businesses are constantly learning from others and adapting those ideas into new products, new services, better customer services. We believe Tutor/Mentor programs need to learn to be good businesses. To help them we are using our research to collect information, program models, contact information, etc., which is providing more choices, and more access to choices. This can help leaders build effective programs with differing resources, curriculum which teaches leaders to run the business of tutoring and mentoring, and which enables volunteers to be more effective.

In a report issued by the Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP) which described what they had learned from a comprehensive model designed to help at-risk teens move successfully through high school, one point stuck out to the T/MC. The QOP leaders said "Reinventing the wheel" in each local context, with limited resources and information, wastes resources that could be better spent finding ways to put the wheel to work. Sharing tools and methods, practitioners can learn from each other, and there performance can be compared. You cannot "franchise" hugs and understanding, but you can provide the infrastructure so that "high tech" and "high-touch" are combined." (contact OIC of America, 1415 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19122 for a full copy of this report)

T/MC conferences, newsletters, web site, and on-going networking are intended to redistribute ideas, information, methods and structure which we encourage practitioners to "put to work". TMC recognizes that no
will attract every potential participant. Even the best training is forgotten in the weeks following. And when working with kids we are working with a group in which every participant is different and has different needs, and is constantly changing. We're constantly looking for ways to make the knowledge and experience of people more available to others. One example of this is that we now post the workshops and presenter names for each Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference, and are adding web links so that in between conferences learners can go directly to knowledge sources and find information to help them build their own programs.

Our training is designed to help programs build structures which support the connection of individual mentors/tutors and individual students. It is intended to help programs keep these structures in place, with a core of committed dedicated individuals at each site who are there long enough to build trust and bonds with youth, parents, schools, volunteers and local businesses, and to accumulate experience and wisdom needed to get better at doing this work from year to year. Finally it is intended to help programs learn how to access the knowledge that exists, in the internet, in the library, from their peers, and to create forums which encourage such networking.

The conferences and the recruitment campaign provide three points during each year where people can come together. The planning meetings between each of these events provide smaller forums where some of these groups meet more frequently. The T/MC newsletters share information and motivation with 12,000 people three times a year. The T/MC Web Site makes this information readily available, while the T/MC Directory enhances the ability of anyone to find any tutor/mentor program in Chicago. Finally, our active participation in internet discussion groups enables us to broadcast this knowledge to people in all parts of the world at virtually no cost.

WHAT IS THE COST?

Cabrini Connections is a non profit organization launched in 1993 with no money and seven volunteers. While we operate the T/MC, we also operate a tutor/mentor program (called Kids' Connection) for 7th through 12th grade teens, which is where our passion and our understanding of the challenges of this work come from. When we created this organization we did so with the understanding that there was a void of leadership to support the building of a citywide network of tutor/mentor programs. We knew the mayor, the school's chief and the United Way each had priorities more important to them which prevented them from giving this issue full, day-to-day attention which it needed. We also knew the media were inconsistent in their coverage, and generally focused on a few high profile neighborhoods or programs, and not every neighborhood, or the entire category of programs where help was needed to sustain and improve the quality of services.

So, we decided to fill this void with the T/MC, and to split our future revenue in funding our Kids' Connection and Tutor/Mentor Connection.

In 1993 we raised $50,000 to fund our efforts. In 1995 we raised $116,000. In 1996 we raised $216,000. In 1997 we raised $275,000. In 1998 we raised nearly $400,000. And in 1999 we are on pace to exceed $400,000. All of this is private money, raised from business and private foundations, and from individuals. About 45% per year has gone to fund the Tutor/Mentor Connection, with another 40% spent on our Kids' Connection and the remainder on Fund Raising and Administrative expenses.

Working in the Chicago market, we feel this has been a very inexpensive program, yet it is having a significant impact. While we feel we are underfunded (confirmed by a Case Study done of the T/MC by The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago), we also do not feel we need to be a $1 million a year agency to provide the type of services to Chicago we intend to provide. Furthermore, we feel that other cities can keep their costs of operating such networks down by joining with the T/MC in some of the events and planning, rather than by creating new structures and reinventing strategies and methods.

There are other models of community networks and we encourage those who read this report to visit the T/MC web site on a continual basis to follow the links on our site to some of these groups. Furthermore, we encourage community networks to build their own web sites, with their own links, and to link yours to the T/MC site.

If knowledge is power, access to knowledge is the path to power. We must create such access for programs, for volunteers, for donors and for the children and families our programs are intended to serve.

SUMMARY

The Tutor/Mentor Week, the Directory, the Web Site, the Volunteer Recruitment campaign, etc. have each resulted from listening to the needs of tutor/mentor programs, looking at media stories which report on poorly
performing schools and kids killing kids, and looking at maps of Chicago which show an extremely poor distribution of tutor/mentor programs in every neighborhood where they are most needed. The events and actions the T/MC has launched were not in place in 1993 when leaders of Cabrini Connections began to form the Tutor/Mentor Connection. Some of them were not even envisioned. When we sent out the 1994 T/MC survey over 120 programs responded. 54% said they had "little or no" contact with leaders of other programs. More than 70% said they would like to have more contact. More than 90% said they would come to a conference if it were free or at a low cost. That lead to the first T/MC Conference in May of 1994. At that conference some program leaders volunteered to work with the T/MC to offer a second conference. The most recent conference on November 5th and 6th was the 12th since 1994.

All we've done is create a structure where we can get up every morning and say "What can we do today that would help every tutor/mentor program in Chicago be more effective?" We've found that there are many things we could try to do and that there are a surprising number of people willing to volunteer busy time and dollars to do this.

While we have had much success, there is much more to do. We must expand the available of training for volunteers and program leaders, increase the dollars available for general operations, help many more programs start in neighborhoods where their are voids, and extend our efforts to the suburban communities where there are similar concentrations of poverty and equal needs for total quality afterschool tutor/mentor programs.

Furthermore, we must help tutor/mentor program leaders get their programs connected to the internet. This is not only a tool for student learning, it is a tool for management learning, for networking, for on-line planning. It is a tool for resource development. It provides an opportunity for programs to show in great detail, and with great creativity, what they do, where they do it and why volunteers, donors, media and business partners should join with them.

We also must find ways to make management tools more easily available, easier to use, and freely available to every program. On line evaluation tools, participation tracking systems, etc. could enable volunteers and students at any program to enter their participation on a given night at a given program, with the network tabulating that information into a report, which the program manager, the board president, a donor or a local school official could easily access at the press of a button on the following day. The technology is available. We just do not yet have the partners to adapt it and make it available to leaders of tutor/mentor programs.

If Chicago did not have a Tutor/Mentor Connection we feel it would have to be created if the needs of children in every at-risk neighborhood were to be met with quality tutor/mentor programs. We feel other cities should also consider developing such a support network and that the T/MC model is a good starting point. In fact, we think that some communities will be able to use the T/MC as a launching pad to obtain higher level support than we now have in Chicago, and by doing so will soon establish themselves as the model the rest of us should learn from. We hope that happens. We think that such efforts will only stimulate our own leaders to do more to expand the resources available to help tutor/mentor programs in Chicago.

We participate in on-line discussion groups on a regular basis to share and borrow ideas. We hope that some of those we meet at the Work Now and In The Future conference will join in those conversations and that we can help you, and you can help us. If you'd like to know more or to start a conversation, just give me a an E-shout at Cabrini Connections at CabriniC@aol.com, or call us using the traditional telephone. We'd love to hear from you.

CABRINI CONNECTIONS:
PHONE: 312-573-8851 FAX: 312-573-8816 E-MAIL: Cabrini C@aol.com
www.tutormentorconnection.org
RECOMMENDED READING
(all of these books can be found on some of the large Internet book stores, such as Amazon.com)

- Mentoring School-Age Children, A Classification of Programs, by Cynthia L. Sipe and Anne E. Roder, prepared for The National Mentoring Partnership's Public Policy Council by Public/Private Ventures

- A Case Study of the Tutor/Mentor Connection of Cabrini Connections. An Effort to Build a Supportive Infrastructure for Tutoring and Mentoring Programs in Chicago. A Working Paper written by Amelia Kohm, Chapin Hall Center For Children at the University of Chicago, 1999
To order the report, go to http://www.chapin.uchicago.edu/ProjectsGuide/index.html

- "Redefining Child and Family Services: Directions for the Future", a report by Joan Wynn, Joan Costello, Robert Halpern, and Harold Richman of the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

- “The Availability and Use of Community Resources for Young Adolescents in an Inner-City and A Suburban Community”, by Julia Littell and Joan Wynn, of the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

- Chicago For Youth: Blueprints for Change, prepared by The Mayor’s Youth Development Task Force, Chicago, Ill., June 1994


- Quantum Opportunities Program, a success story, by Dr. Andrew Hahn, Brandeis University, Heller Graduate School, Sept. 1995

- Savage Inequalities AND Amazing Grace, books written by Jonathan Kozal

- Rethinking America, book written by Hedrick Smith

- The Read-Aloud Handbook, by Jim Trelease

- Making the Case: Measuring the Impact of Youth Development Programs, available from the Search Institute, 1-800-888-7828

- Some Things DO Make a Difference for Youth: A Compendium of Evaluations of Youth Programs and Practices, available from the American Youth Policy Forum, Suite 719, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036. (cost is $10.0, including postage. All orders must be prepaid)