

Fall 2019

Call 435-260-9646
for more information.

www.grandmentoring.org

GRAND AREA MENTORING COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” –Anne Frank

Grand County School District



Establishing a Steady State

Over 16 million children across America lack consistent access to a positive adult presence in their lives. This isn't a trivial statistic. For youths who live in poverty and are more likely to experience severe or recurring trauma, adult support may be the only thing preventing them from entering into a long-term pattern of brain and organ dysfunction.

Harvard's Center for the Developing Child describes the causes and consequences of toxic stress. They report: “Toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance

abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—*without adequate adult support*. This kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years.”

Adult support can make the difference between a normal and toxic stress response. This means that interventions like mentoring can help protect against the problematic down-

(Continued on reverse)

Moab's Community-Based Mentoring

Grand Area Mentoring's pilot community-based mentoring project ran through the 2018/2019 school year, and the results are promising.

- **100%** of surveyed faculty agreed that community-based mentoring is developmentally appropriate for middle school and high school students.
- **100%** of participating community-based mentees said they like meeting off campus more than at school.

- **100%** of sixth graders want to continue mentoring in middle school next year, 33% more the year prior.
- **100%** of middle and high school students opted in for this year!

Additionally, mentees at the middle and high school outperformed their younger peers in all three key measures: 80% earned fewer office referrals, 75% improved their grades, and 70% missed fewer days of school. Adolescent mentoring supercharged!

Major Partners:

George S. & Dolores Doré
Eccles Foundation
Grand County School District
Laurie Michaels & David
Bonderman
Jennifer Speers
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About GrandAM...

This is Grand Area Mentoring's 15th year of service. The program is generously funded by Grand County School District, the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, Jennifer Speers, Laurie Michaels & David Bonderman, Red Cliffs Lodge, the Carl George Bjorkman Foundation, the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, Grand Co. Education Foundation, The Synergy Company, and many other kind organizations, partners, and donors.

Adult mentors meet with students in one-on-one settings to encourage growth and bolster self-confidence. Their weekly sessions sometimes include board games, basketball, and computers. Other matches pursue crafts, reading, and talking about life. Under Grand Area Mentoring's care, mentors and students seek activities that are mutually enjoyable and enriching.

Grand Area Mentoring creates lasting and fruitful relationships using an evidence-based approach. New volunteers are trained in mentoring best practices and always supported with regular staff contact. Volunteers offer one meeting per week and receive the satisfaction of positively impacting a life forever.

Thank you, Jeff Babik!

Thank you to Jeff Babik, former AmeriCorps VISTA at Grand Area Mentoring! During the 2018/2019 school year, Jeff helped create or strengthen important partnerships with the City of Moab, Moonflower Community Cooperative, the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, and more.



Steady State *(continued from front)*

stream results of childhood trauma. The Center for the Developing child writes, "research shows that, even under stressful conditions, supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress response."

Not every youth participant at Grand Area Mentoring has experienced toxic stress. However, some have. This is why Grand Area Mentoring strives to bring responsible, caring adults together with at-risk youth. Mentoring relationships in Moab typically begin in early elementary school, between grades one and four. These one-on-one matches last for years, providing dependable support to combat a host of adverse factors.

Harvard explains: "stable, loving

relationships can buffer against harmful effects by restoring stress response systems to 'steady state.'" A regulated nervous system, with reduced levels of the stress hormone cortisol, can empower bodies and minds to grow normally and even regain lost ground, well into adulthood.

To ensure that positive relationships thrive, Grand Area Mentoring carefully screens, trains, and supports volunteer mentors in Moab over time. They have many opportunities for advanced training throughout the year, and all are asked to attend Kelly Vagts' three-part Trauma-Informed Mentoring series.

For more on the ACEs research and how our society can respond, visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/y7nm7ajj>

