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Honor your father, become a mentor
Connecticut survey shows a dire need for male mentors

While Father's Day offers a chance to honor the wonderful dads across the state, the day also draws attention to the many Connecticut youth lacking a positive male role model. Mentoring programs statewide have helped fill this void in the lives of many children, but more mentors are needed, and a specific need exists for male mentors.

A 2009 census conducted by The Governor's Prevention Partnership shows that boys and girls are being served essentially equally, but there is a shortage of male mentors. The survey shows that 52% of the youth in mentoring programs are male and 48% are female. Women are more likely than men to volunteer as mentors, with 59% of mentors being female and only 41% male.

"Research shows that having the positive influence of an adult male makes a real difference in the life of a boy," said Jill Spinetti, President and CEO of The Partnership. "Children and teens in mentoring programs experience improvements in academic performance, behavior and relationships at home and elsewhere. They also feel better about themselves and are able to make better decisions."

While over 12,000 children are currently being served by over 150 mentoring programs in the state, The Governor's Prevention Partnership estimates that an additional 160,000 children in Connecticut need mentors to guide them toward a healthy future. These children face the possibility of personal and academic failure as a result of poverty, family issues, incarcerated parents and other problems.

"For as little as one hour a week, a mentor can empower a child and contribute greatly to his or her potential," said program manager Roland Harmon. "It's very important for men to stand up and make this commitment to helping the youth of their community."

Activities in mentoring programs focus on simple, everyday activities like going to sporting events, playing basketball or chess, working with computers, reading, going to parks and watching movies.

To become a mentor, go to www.preventionworksct.org or contact Roland Harmon of The Governor's Prevention Partnership at 860.523.8042 x 18 or roland.harmon@preventionworksct.org.

About The Governor's Prevention Partnership

A not-for-profit partnership between state government and business leaders with a mission to keep Connecticut's youth safe, successful and drug-free today for a stronger workforce tomorrow, The Governor's Prevention Partnership has four key initiatives: The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership, supporting quality youth mentoring programs across the state; Operation Respect, CT, creating positive school climates and bully-free communities; the Connecticut Youth Wellness Initiative, preventing underage drinking and youth substance abuse; and the Media Partnership, creating direct relationships with media to raise awareness about issues affecting youth. The Partnership works in collaboration with local, regional and statewide providers and its efforts impact youth in every community in Connecticut. Co-chaired by Governor M. Jodi Rell and Don Langer, President of AmeriChoice by United Healthcare, The Partnership has worked since 1989 to maximize youth development and create Connecticut's future work force.

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