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Making a Difference

by Bob Scherbarth

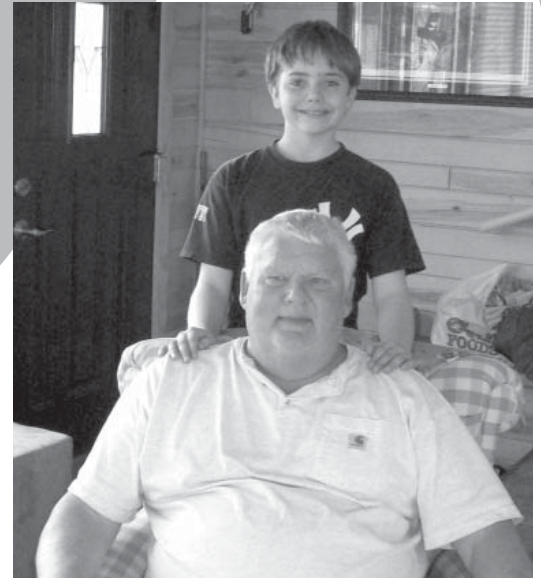
Terre is now 11 years old and I've been his mentor since he was six. A good friend of mine mentored a young person for five years and he felt it would be something I'd really enjoy. He was right!

My first meeting with Terre was at the Bovey Dairy Queen. I recall how excited Terre was to get a mentor. His brothers had mentors and they all had great experiences. Terre wanted his own mentor. I recall telling Nancy that I was really excited to be part of the Bridges Community-based Mentoring program, since I needed someone to chop and stack wood. I don't know if she has ever gotten over or forgiven me for that comment!

We have done and experienced a lot together over the years that would take up more space than this short article. My wife and I try to do something with Terre at least once or twice a month whether its going to a movie, going to a ball game, attending a school event or just hanging out at the house. We have taken some fun trips and in fact, he is currently saving for our next in August. We opened a joint savings account for Terre and each week he calls to tell me with pride just how much more he has saved. Terre's mom and I felt that learning to save money is a great "life lesson." Of course, I tell him each time he calls that it is not nearly enough and to keep saving. Soon I will borrow money from him.

Terre is active in many sports — baseball, football, ski jumping, bowling, golf, etc. He tried his hand at acting this year, as a Card in *Alice in Wonderland* at the Reif. He's involved in so many things that it's sometimes difficult to keep up with him.

We also banter. Terre and I recently went on a fishing trip to Mille Lacs. I was giving him a



Bob [seated] and Terre

bad time about his fishing skills — or lack of — and he turned to my wife with a wide grin and said, "see what I have to put up with!" He's right.

Terre is a great kid and it's fun watching him grow up. I think he has shot up two feet and six shoe sizes in the past five years. We've found that he has a great sense of humor, a love for history, and is the *ultimate* storyteller. However, what we admire most is just how respectful Terre is to us and just how important his family is to him.

Our grandkids live in the Twin Cities and Wisconsin areas. We haven't seen them as much as we like so Terre has been a surrogate grandson and very much a part of our family. All of our children and grandkids know him by name.

I and my wife recommend mentoring to *anyone* who has a love and interest in children and young people. Mentoring has been both a fun and rewarding experience. We hope Terre and his family feel the same.

Dinner with Friends coming this summer

We're planning our Dinner with Friends fundraiser dinners for this summer, with the dinners to be held in July and August. We're looking for a few more people to host a dinner. If you enjoy entertaining, consider having a dinner for Bridges. You choose your own menu, a date that works for you (often, especially in the summer, mid-week times are better), and the number of people you would like to serve (it could be six or eight for a formal dinner or more for a casual backyard barbecue). We take care of sending the invitations and taking the reservations and payments. The dinners will range in price from \$50 to \$100 per person. So grab a friend to help out and start planning. Dates and menus will be needed by late May.

Give us a call at 326-4700 for more information.

Donations

(received since our last newsletter)

Vicki Andrews
Arrowhead Promotion & Fulfillment Co.
Leo and Corinne Burley
Andy and Jaci David
Fraternal Order of Eagles
Paula Frings
Charles Kampen and Pam Rajala
Ron and Deborah L'Amie
Bob Malwitz
Dennis and Susan Neitzke
Tom and Deb Page
Rapids Printing
Denny and Wendy Roy
Charles and Judy Sherman
Star of the North Lions Club
Kurt and LaVonne Thompson
WalMart
Wilkus Architects, Inc.
Zion WELCA

Nancy's Notes

Volunteerism is alive and well in our community. Bridges is blessed to have so many people contributing to our programs as adult mentors, Lunch Buddies, student mentors, as well as all those folks who help with our group activities. Those who give of themselves through financial contributions also fill a necessary role in keeping Bridges Kinship Mentoring vital! Some folks help out with our mailings. Some have stepped up and hosted a dinner as part of our *Dinner with Friends* fundraiser. We celebrate everyone who contributes and volunteers. National Volunteer week is April 27 through May 3 and is a time to honor those who volunteer. But here at Bridges, every day is a day we thank, appreciate and honor our volunteers.

Volunteerism is something that often is instilled when you are a child. Perhaps you watched your parents volunteer. Maybe you were a Boy or Girl Scout and participated in group volunteer activities. If you are mentoring a young person, now would be a great time to instill that virtue in your mentee. One possibility is helping with the **Plant to Plate Garden** (see page 3). Another is helping to build a **Habitat for Humanity** house (youth must be age 16 or older and you need to contact Habitat at 326-6185 to arrange). What a great way to teach your mentee construction skills AND volunteerism! Other possibilities include helping at the Food Bank, cleaning up roadsides, volunteering at an animal shelter, or helping at the Community Café.

There are many more volunteer options out there you could tap into. Keep your eyes and ears open for the opportunities and then just DO IT!

New Brochures

We have a new brochure for Bridges — thanks to the creative talents of Dawn



Bridges is blessed to have so many people contribute to our programs.

Renee of dawn design. Dawn is our board chair this year and she has designed several communications pieces for Bridges, including our web site. She also puts our quarterly newsletter together. I think you'll agree her work is outstanding and we're so happy to have her help and expertise.

If you would like a copy of the new brochure (perhaps to give to a friend whom you think would make a great mentor) or would like some brochures to put at your workplace, church or other location, please let us know.

We need you!

You can help Bridges by becoming an Ambassador! Whether you're a mentor, previously mentored, or have never mentored...if you understand the value of mentoring, you can help by building awareness of Bridges Kinship Mentoring programs and the need for mentors!

The time commitment is small (an hour or so a month). You'll link Bridges and *your* community network, identifying and contacting possible mentors. Ambassadors can include information about Bridges in bulletins, newsletters or other group publications. Bridges staff provides materials and training, too. We're available to help in every way possible, be it talking with a potential mentor candidate or giving a presentation to a group.

Help us grow, be an Ambassador!

Mentoring and STEM

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math!

We see kids playing handheld games, having marathons with the video systems or walking around like Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* with "ear buds" attached to the hearing appendages in their heads. It's technology! It's our present; it's our future. Bridges Mentoring is teaming up with Minnesota Mentoring Partnerships to concentrate on STEM in 2008.

Mentors are encouraged to introduce activities in the realm of science, technology, engineering and math. This could be something as fun as building a birdhouse. For example, math skills are used to calculate the dimensions and angles of a bird house.

Technology is everywhere.

Do video game-crazed kids actually know how the games are made? Do they know that a series of commands give a set of options that will determine a certain action?

Engineering could be something as simple as Legos. Build a few different cars to see if one will travel faster or farther than the other. Will friction play a part in speed? Will two, three or four wheels make it faster? How about the mass of the car? It's all in the physics and it's engineering!



Science is a huge area of study, but examples of it are all around this wonderful area we live. The Forest History Center offers a wealth of information about the woods. Children can learn about the products that come from trees. They can also see how trees are felled with a tree-harvester simulator.

Our world is starting to realize that we need to **green** and environmentally responsible. What a way to start! Children may also be interested in the *taxonomy* of trees — the classification of trees and plants according to their natural relationships. *Tree Identification Book*, by George Symonds and Stephen Chelminski, is an excellent resource! Check out Tom Brown's wonderful books about animal tracking. The possibilities are limitless!

With these lazy days of summer approaching, consider sharing science, technology, engineering or math with your mentee or child. In fact, it's never too early to explore career options with

a child. It's amazing to see how many children love to hear that you could actually have a job identifying trees, or working with wild or domestic animals, making models of buildings, drawing detailed pictures of houses...or...well you

get the idea.

Share STEM with a child today!



Plant to Plate garden project

Plant to Plate is a wonderful opportunity for mentors and mentees to volunteer in the community, enjoy our beautiful summer weather and tend to produce for our local food shelf.

Second Harvest North Central Food Bank and the North Central Research and Outreach Center has a garden where young and old can work and learn together to produce good food for others who are in need.

Bridges will have their own bed, approximately 4 feet by 26 feet. Fifth grade students at Southwest Elementary will plant the garden and Bridges volunteers will tend it beginning mid-June through harvest.

We will coordinate a "tending" night once a week; gather our group at the garden to pull weeds and later to pick our harvest. If you are interested in joining our group, please contact Lori at 326-4700 for more information and to sign up!

See you in the garden!!!

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Food 'n Fun Night
 Tuesday, May 20
 5:30-7:30PM
 Bowling and Miniature Golf at Midway Bowl [Hwy 169E, Grand Rapids]. Pizza and pop provided.

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Waiting kids

Our Waiting List is growing, and we need more mentors! Summer is a GREAT time to become a mentor. Think of all the things you do in summer that could easily include a child! Kids are out of school and eager to be involved in anything — from hanging out at the beach, going fishing, attending one of the local festivals, or simply spending time at your home.

Call us if you would like to learn more about mentoring and how to get started. Here are a few of the kids who are waiting for you...



Christy – age 9: will be happy doing anything YOU enjoy! She loves being outside, exploring nature, playing games, cooking, going to the library and reading together.

Nate – age 8: loves sports of all kinds, swimming, boating, biking, fishing, and hands-on activities such as woodworking.

Amy – age 12: enjoys outside activities such as fishing and camping, likes arts and crafts, scrapbooking, games, and going to movies or shopping.

Matt – age 9: enjoys sports, fishing, swimming, playing games, reading and writing stories. He'd like to build a fort!

Paul – age 6: really likes baseball, riding his bike, and playing with his Play Station and transformer toys. He likes to keep busy!

Greg – age 12: is really into geocaching (uses GPS – kind of like orienteering). In addition to video game interests, he likes movies, bowling, woodworking, biking and fishing.

Sam – age 7: likes to be active. Enjoys playing ball, hockey, fishing, campfires. He likes video games, too, but mom wants him to get involved in other activities more!

Ellie and Laurie – 11 years old. Each girl would like their own mentor. They're in the process of applying, so we don't have their primary interests yet. But they live in Nashwauk. Ellie attends Conner Jasper in Bovey and Laurie attends Keewatin Elementary. If you are in the vicinity of Bovey/Coleraine to Nashwauk/Keewatin and want to consider mentoring one of the girls, give us a call.

New matches

Community-based mentoring

Connie Lundin and JoAnn
Bonnie Vornbrock and Chelsea and Shannon
Jerry and Joyce Rahne and Tyler
Chris Kavanaugh and Arlo
Tammy Warren and Shaylee

School-based mentoring

John Zasada and Nicky
Mary Salisbury and Devon
Matt Kangas and Evan
Matthew Bourman and Tyler
Stephanie Warren and Aurora
Josh Nelson and Jordan

Families Together: parent support group

There is now a parent support group in Itasca County for parents and caregivers of children of all ages. The group is parent-led with the guidance of a trained facilitator.

The support group is held every Tuesday from 6 – 7:30PM at the Itasca Resource Center. Child care is free. Stop at the Community Café for dinner, and then join other parents as they discuss common parenting challenges and share strategies for success.

For more information, contact the Crisis Nursery at 327-8652.

Free and specially priced activities for mentors and mentees!

Use your Bridges membership card to access the following deals — remember to THANK the establishment.

Itasca Family YMCA: free for both adult and child

Midway Bowl & Mini-golf: free for the child

Golf: Eagle Ridge, Pokegama, and Sugar Lake – free for the child

Children's Discovery Museum: free for the child

Reif Center performances: free for the child

Forest History Center: free for the child

Shooting Sports Educ. Center: free for the child

Leave a lasting legacy

Consider a contribution to the *Bridges: Kinship Mentoring Endowment Fund*. For more information, contact Bridges [326-4700] or the Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation [327-8855].

Help us help kids!

Contribute what you can, today! For your convenience, an envelope is included with this newsletter.



703 N Pokegama Avenue
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218-326-4700 bridgesmentoring.org



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Upcoming Events

May 1-2

Living History School Days, White Oak Fur Post, Deer River. 9am - 3:30pm

May 2

Community Stage/Open Mic, Brewed Awakenings 6-8pm. FREE

May 8-11

Anne of Green Gables, Itasca Children's Theater Spring production at the Reif Center.

May 9

Annual Fishing Opener Community BBQ, Old Central School. 4-7pm

May 16-and Fridays throughout the summer

Stock Car races, Grand Rapids speedway — Fairgrounds. 7pm

May 20

Food 'n Fun Night at Midway Bowl, Grand Rapids. 5:30pm

June 1

Arbor Month Celebration, Forest History Center. Plant a White Pine in the forest. Noon-5pm. FREE

June 1

Open House day at Scenic State Park near Bigfork.

June 6-8

Reif Dance Company Spring dance production *Curious George* at Reif Center

June 7

Annual Statewide State Park Open House. No vehicle permit required.

June 7

Wild edibles at Forest History Center. Noon-3pm

June 12

Coleraine City Band concert, Longyear Park, Coleraine. 7-8pm. FREE

June 15

Kid's Day at the Forest History Center. Noon-5pm

June 20-22

19th Annual Bluegrass Festival of Old Time Music at Itasca County Fairgrounds. FREE

June 21

Acoustic Music at the Edge, Edge Center for the Arts - Bigfork

June 26-28

33rd Annual Judy Garland Festival, Grand Rapids

June 27-28

7th Annual Blackwater Barge Festival, Cohasset Community Center and Portage Park. Lots of FREE events.