

JOURNAL of the
INTERNATIONAL
TELEMENTOR
PROGRAM

Telementor

MAXIMIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL™

■ LIFE-RELEVANT LEARNING

Winning Entrepreneurs!

See page 3

GET TO KNOW ...

HP Mentor

Linda Hoffman

See page 8

FROM THE FOUNDER

6 Ways to Keep a

Student Moving Forward

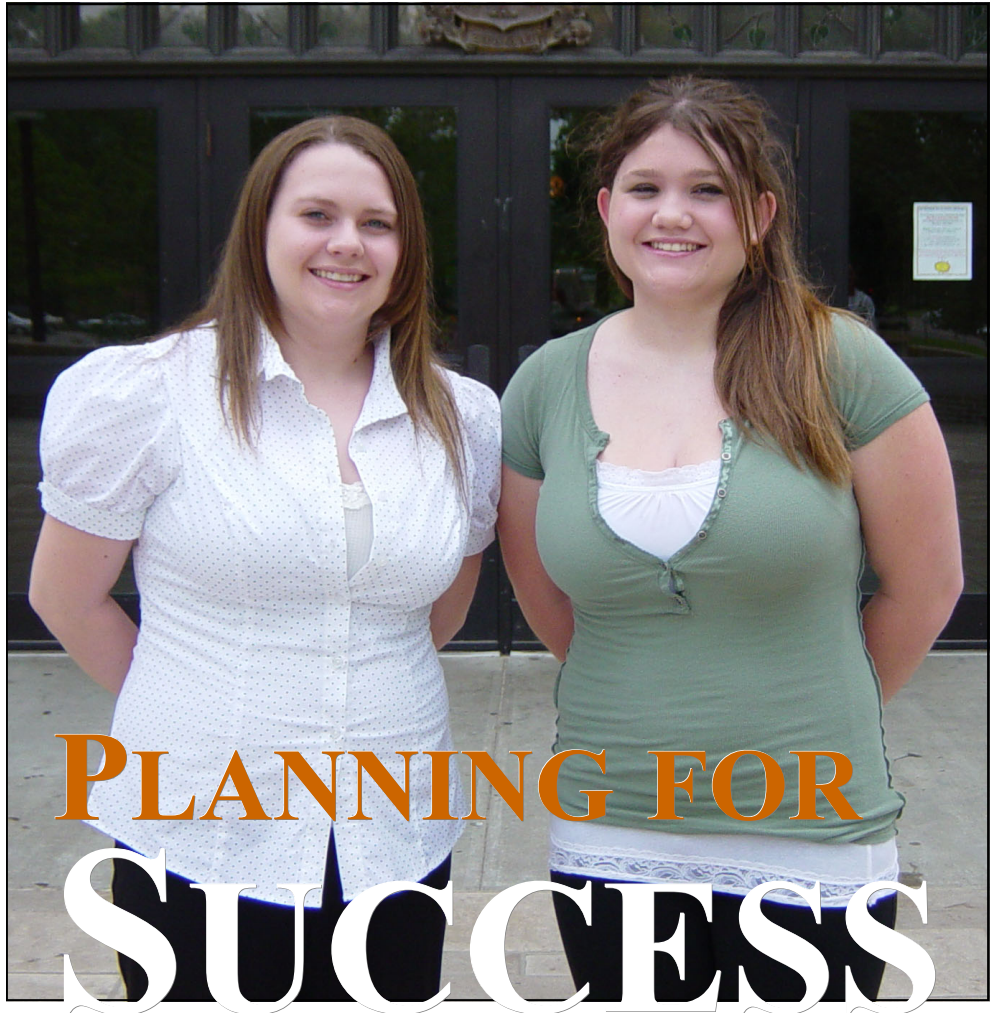
See page 2

MENTOR PROFILES

The Anthropologist

in the Dollar Store

See page 10



DON'T MISS OUR **SPONSORS** ON PAGE 12

■ GRATEFUL STUDENTS

“Not only did I get excellent help, but ITP provided me with a mentor who really understood my plan.” **See page 4**



DEDICATED MENTORS

such as HP's Linda Hoffman make a big difference in the lives of the students with which they work.

See page 8

6 Ways to Keep a Student Moving Forward

■ **ONE OF THE JOYS** of my childhood was listening to my grandfather, George Neils, tell stories of growing up in Cass Lake, Minnesota. With rapt attention I would lean in and become part of the story. One of my favorite stories was about the horse-drawn sleighs pulling thousands of pounds of logs across frozen Minnesota lakes. It was his job as a teenager to jog along next to the sled and pour water in front of the runners, making it easier for the horses. He emphasized that it was always easier to keep the sled moving than to start it from a dead stop.

Young children's interests are like that sled. They are already moving. The healthy adults surrounding the child are the ones who should be throwing water in front of the sled's runners. Unfortunately, for many youth, instead of water, sand is thrown in front of the runners. This doesn't happen intentionally. Most adults would shudder at the thought. Yet, time and time again I see the passion to pursue one's interests begin to die out after the fourth grade. From the toddler years through the fourth grade, based on my own observations, children naturally strive to connect the dots between how they spend their day and what's happening in their hearts. They can put form around their interests quite easily and with a lot of passion and energy.

What is the sand? As students move through traditional education systems, more and more of the measures are extrin-



Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

sic. Grades, smiley faces in the upper right corner of worksheets, candy jars on the teacher's desk, and praise for mediocre work are all common and damaging to a child's intrinsic motivation. Parents who monitor their child's progress in school based only on the almighty report card are missing an enormous opportunity to keep the sled moving. These same parents expect their Johnny or Susie to graduate from high school and "go off and pursue unique interests successfully" because that's what people do. Well Johnny and Susie are going to have great difficulty doing this if adults never encourage them to discuss or put form around their interests.

There is a flawed societal assumption that high school students never had the ability to pursue their unique interests successfully and it will happen someday in the future based on maturity, wisdom, experience, and support. That's simply not true. These students had that ability when they were younger. How does society miss this?

continued on page 9 ►

Telementor

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Winning Entrepreneurs!

How Mentors Play a Supporting Role BY VICTOR RIVERO



“I knew they’d be there to help me along, and to answer any questions I had. All students of any age should have a mentor.”

◀ **DYNAMIC DUO.** Kristen Blodgett (left) took first place and Rosie Perkins (right) took second in a business plan competition sponsored by Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas. YEK creates entire curriculums and trains the teachers how to teach it. They also provide students with opportunities for summer partnerships with local businesses and opportunities to apply for college scholarships.

■ **KRISTEN BLODGETT** had a business dream that might have remained just that. Instead, the high school junior began making her dreams fall into place through her teacher, an encouraging program, and the additional help of some special mentors. This triple threat quite literally proved to be a winning combination: Kristen placed first in Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas business plan competition, and is now making her idea a business reality.

“I enrolled in an Entrepreneurship class at my high school expecting to learn basic business strategies, but I learned quite a lot more,” says Kristen. When Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas (YEK) allotted her teacher Lana Northup a budget, this enabled students in Kristen’s class to conduct activities such

as Market Day, where they set up their own food stand, cooked and then sold their eats for a profit.

“We also got incentives for doing well in the class,” says Kristen, “and that definitely encouraged me!” But things were just getting cooking, and Kristen was just warming up.

Developing Connections

One of the main projects of the YEK curriculum called for students to create their own Business Plan. “This involved coming up with an idea to sell a service or product and going into detail about finances, marketing strategies and the product or service we were making,” Kristen explains. “When we did this project -- it took about two months -- we got to use the International Telementoring Pro-

gram,” she smiles.

Initially expecting her mentor might offer minimal help with a few questions here or there, Kristen was quickly surprised by what unfolded. “Not only was he a tailor, which related a great deal to my plan, but he was also great with finances.” Her mentor, Byron Chun, “didn’t just ‘give me the answers,’” she explains. Instead, he offered detailed responses and helped her to really understand what she was doing. “I would attribute a great deal of my success in the competition to Byron. He went above and beyond just answering my questions.”

Besides Byron, Kristen also had another ITP mentor, Al Harrington, who helped increase her certainty and confidence. “My business plan was to make and sell stretchy, decorated instrument case covers. They basically fit over your instrument case and personalize with colors, sequins, and your name,” she says.



“Al ordered one of my products for his son from me -- just based upon my business plan. He must have had a lot of faith in my abilities!”

What Every Student Needs

Both mentors made it easy for Kristen to move forward. “Sewing already is a passion of mine, but with their help I was ready to put a lot of extra work into it. I knew they’d be there to help me along, and to

“When I first started this project, I never thought that I’d actually become a business woman with a successful project. Now that I’ve had encouragement from my mentors and others, I plan on becoming a success.”

answer any questions I had. All students of any age should have a mentor,” she says. “Bill Gates must’ve had a mentor during his life to help him along and encourage him to keep trying at what he does -- now look where he is!” she laughs. “Just by having a mentor, I’m excited to continue with my project.”

Kristen believes mentors provide motivation -- a vital component to her success thus far. “A person can do something on their own,” she says, “but it’s nice to have someone there to help you whenever you need it. That’s why ITP is such a great program for us. Not only did I get excellent help, but ITP provided me with a mentor who really understood my plan.”

As for her immediate future, Kristen has already set up meetings with a small business starter class.

She's also enlisted help from her best friend Rosie Perkins, second-place winner in the YEK competition. "We plan on selling my case cover idea to a manufacturer and having them sold everywhere," says Kristen. "Because of my mentor, my dreams are this big. When I first started this project, I never thought that I'd actually become a business woman with a successful project. Now that I've had encouragement from my mentors and others, I plan on becoming a success."

ROSIE PERKINS also attends Topeka High School. She first became involved in YEK when she, too, joined the Entrepreneurship class. Initially, Rosie entered the class with some trepidation, but right away, her teacher, Lana Northup, introduced students to the program and accompanying benefits that they might receive -- "*If we worked hard!*" quotes Rosie -- as well as making everyone feel welcome in her classroom.

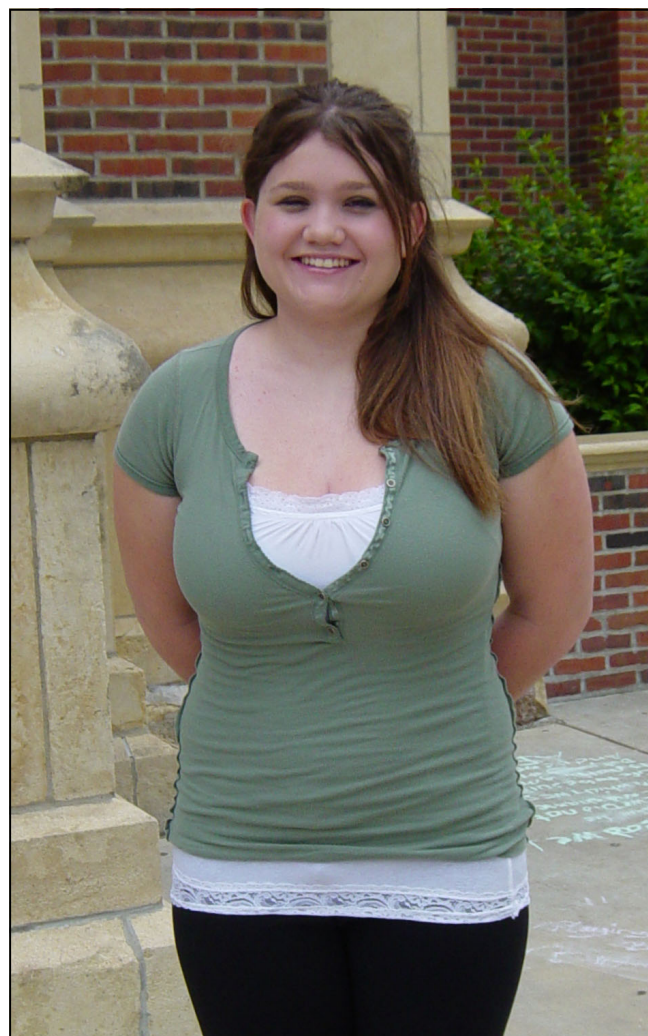
"My only goal at the time was to pass the class, but when I heard of the business plan competition, I raised my hand in excitement, wanting to be one of the top two winners," says Rosie. "These experiences helped me to realize who I could potentially be -- as long as I aimed for my highest goal."

A Good "Business Friendship"

Interestingly, as soon as Rosie came up with an idea for her business plan, she says, "I knew I had the potential of being one of the top two."

And while Rosie's confidence carried her forward, she continued to keep a balanced approach. "I know I couldn't have made it as far as I did in the competition if it weren't for my mentor, Byron. I learned from him and his experiences and actually understood what he was talking about!"

In fact, says Rosie, "Byron put everything I was unsure about into specific details so I could better understand the information. Before working with



him, I didn't understand how a business worked or how much effort was needed in order to accomplish your dream," she says.

"Despite the hard work that I had to put into it, getting to go to the class was what got me up in the morning."

By way of the ITP's secure messaging system, "Byron was there for me every day from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm, helping me out and teaching me a better understanding of the material." ►

Rosie soon discovered that her mentor was already experienced in running a business (“which helped both of us out,” she says). Good thing! When Rosie first sat down and read the blank business plan on her computer screen, “I was in shock with the information that I would have to fill in over the next several weeks!”

But as soon as Rosie began corresponding with her mentor, “we quickly developed a good business friendship which led me to winning not only one of the top two in class, but also one of the top two in the big competition,” she says.

“I knew I had changed as a person; I was no longer afraid of who I was. And I wasn’t scared to let people know the knowledge I had stored inside.”

A computer technologist at a large financial services corporation, Rosie’s mentor also had experience in the education sector managing computer systems for multiple college campuses, where he often tutored and held seminars for professors and students. Currently, he also volunteers his time assisting small businesses manage their growth and further their expansion, Rosie explains.

A Walk Down Memory Lane

So what was Rosie’s award-winning plan? Brilliantly named “Memory Lane” -- it’s both a retail and service business specializing in the emerging world of scrap-booking. She first came up with the idea when her teacher had students jot down hobbies and how they might develop them into a business.

“When I decided to go into scrap-booking, I was only leaning toward a service business that focused on

teaching classes to local scrap-bookers in Shawnee County,” says Rosie. However, she soon realized that she’d have to be a service business as well, so she could sell materials to her customers.

Because Rosie wanted to be one of the top two business plan winners in her class, she knew she would have to “work extra hard” in order to win. “Despite the hard work that I had to put into it, getting to go to the class was what got me up in the morning,” she says. “I had a lot of fun writing the business plan but couldn’t have done it without my teacher and mentor.”

Being both a retail and a service business became the hardest part for Rosie in writing her plan. “Besides working at least an hour on it every night,” she says, “I had both Mrs. Northup and my mentor, Byron, to help get me through the writing part.”

How to Inspire a Student

Mentors are “inspirational leaders that you get to know really quickly,” Rosie says. “They want to help out young students because they know that we’re the future. That may sound like a cheesy line, but it’s true.” She admits that she couldn’t promise she would have made it through without her mentor, Byron. “He pushed me to reach my goal. And when I wanted to give up, he pushed me even harder.”

Although Byron would always help Rosie revise certain parts of her plan, he never did the real work for her. “Every student that struggles in any subject -- whether it’s math or English -- should be receiving the kind of the help that I received from my mentor,” she says. “I’d never planned to make it as far as I did until it actually happened. It’s still kind of hard to believe.”

This past summer, best friend, classmate and first-place winner -- Kristen -- decided to pursue her business and asked Rosie to be her partner. “With her winnings, we’re working with YEK and really getting to know how to run an actual business. We’re hoping to become well known around Topeka, and we can’t wait to get started. Who knows? Maybe, if we make enough money, we could soon run *my* business!” ■

STAGE PLIGHT. “Because of my experience creating and sharing my business plan this past year, I’m no longer afraid of speaking in front of people. As master of ceremonies during the presentations of our class’ business plans, this taught me to believe in myself. I was always an outgoing person, but only around the people I knew -- *not* the ones who were really important when it came to winning the competition. As soon as I stood in front of the judges on that Friday morning, I knew I had changed as a person; I was no longer afraid of who I was. And I wasn’t scared to let people know the knowledge I had stored inside. Besides winning second and a \$900 scholarship, the best part of this experience was when my mom cried with joy. She had never seen me so proud of who I was until I got up to the front--nor had I! This program is something I really enjoyed. I wouldn’t be who I am today without my teacher, Mrs. Northup, my best friend, Kristen, and my mentor, Byron--all of whom helped in making me become someone I thought I would never be.” --**Rosie Perkins, Topeka High School Student**

■ Challenging and Fun: A Teacher’s Perspective

A 28-year veteran business teacher, Lana Northup has taught Entrepreneurship at Topeka High School for the past seven years. Her class is funded by Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas (YEK), which doesn’t just fund her class; YEK creates entire curriculums and trains the teachers how to teach it. They also provide the students with opportunities for summer partnerships with local businesses and opportunities to apply for college scholarships. YEK enables students to get much more hands-on business experience than they could otherwise. Winners of the YEK business plan competition received \$1,000 and \$900 respectively (Kristen, 1st

place; Rosie, 2nd).

“Rosie and Kristen are best friends and were both determined from the beginning of the project to win the competition! They’re both great girls who are very involved in school, especially music. They worked very hard on their business plans and had mentors who spent a lot of time with them, challenging them to think critically,” says Lana.

“Rosie wrote a plan to open a scrap-booking retail business that also had a service: scrap-booking lessons. She completed an income statement for both the retail and service part of the business. Her idea required more work and was more complicated than that of most students,” Lana says. “Kristen wrote her plan on making decorative musical instrument covers distinguishable from others, and Kristen plans to pursue this business into the future,” she adds.

“They were both very fortunate to have mentors who thoroughly took an interest in them. There was an amazing flow of information between the students and their mentors. They included a sample of their mentor correspondence as an appendix in the business plans,” says Lana.

“I work very hard to make teaching challenging and learning fun,” Lana adds. “The mentoring project is an example of this. Although it’s extra work for me, I’ve found there are benefits of telementoring without parallel to anything else we do. Students take a more active interest in their individual business plans with the one-on-one help from mentors, who are matched well. I absolutely *love* the telementoring program *and my students do, too!*”

When it comes to peer collaboration, teaching can sometimes be a lonely profession, but Lana had the good fortune to collaborate with fellow educator Wendy Meier, and refused to end her comments without acknowledging Wendy’s dedicated support. “Wendy is an excellent teacher who works with telementoring in Topeka. She’s *very* enthusiastic and is great with the students. She has been an asset to the program.” ■



MENTOR PROFILE:

HP's Linda Hoffman

BY VICTOR RIVERO

A mentor for teacher Barb Slattenow's class this past Spring, Linda works in TSG Influencer Marketing for HP. Her goals and purposes are to "do the best I can do to be successful at my job and to find better ways to do my job," she says. And to do that, she continues to learn. In fact, one of her key avenues of "professional development" is what she learns in her experiences as a mentor through the program. "ITP helps me help students to use Internet tools, search engines, to do their assignments; and to help them find the resources they need; and to learn," she says.

Linda describes ITP with three words:

- **Rewarding:** It's knowing you helped a student succeed.
- **Informative:** I have learned a lot about various careers and subjects that I wouldn't have learned had it not been for this experience.
- **Satisfying:** I've helped many students see projects through to completion.

One of her most recent highlights with the program involved helping a student in teacher Barb Slattenow's class determine a career choice, and then "figuring out what career was really of interest to the student," says Linda. "The student had many areas of interest, so we needed to narrow down the choices. Using some of the tools Barb had given the students, we settled on one career."

With an average of just two or three communications back and forth with the student per week, Linda helps keep her student's project on track and assists her in discovering the requirements needed to pursue her career. One challenge in that is "finding the information to determine what was needed before, during and after college so she could pick the courses she needed in a timely and organized fashion," says Linda.

What gets a little frustrating is that a teacher or mentor or even parent for that matter doesn't always see the results, she says. "Hopefully, the student is pursuing their career choice and taking the classes they need in preparation for college." But in Linda's view, a direct benefit for the student that comes from ITP is having someone other than their teacher to help them succeed. "A lot of times students don't want to go to the teacher with their questions. By using a secure web-based messaging system, it's more anonymous and they can ask what they may feel are 'stupid' questions," she says.

As for what Linda would tell others thinking about mentoring for the first time or even those continuing to mentor: "It's a great way to go beyond your job or career and help a student succeed. I've been fortunate to be involved in this program for many years," she shares. "I've only had one student who quit in the middle of the project and I wasn't able to see him through -- the student was expelled from school."

But with the enduring influence of mentors like Linda, that scenario is a lot less likely to happen. And in fact it is being invisibly prevented with each student who gets the practical help and inspiration they need to make things happen -- with a mentor to offer them support. ■

► *continued from page 2*

“6 Ways to Keep a Student Moving Forward”

How do you keep the sled moving during those early years so we don't end up with more “deer in the headlights” looks from high school graduates? It's quite simple. I've seen teachers and mentors do this over and over again in our program. Let's start with younger children, grades K-4.

1

Help the child put form around his or her interests by becoming informed, connected, and engaged. It doesn't matter whether that interest lasts for five minutes or five years. Think of that interest as a seed. It's not the seed's responsibility to go to the local nursery and pick out a pot, potting soil, and fertilizer. No, that's the job of the Gardener, the healthy adults surrounding that child. Help the child become informed about the interest area, connected with people who share that interest, and engaged by making a difference in that area of interest. This is a winning combination at any age, for any interest.

2

Help the child create a plan for each grade level that is based on his or her interests, where the institutional requirements of the local school are always a subset of that plan. The school requirements are never “The Plan”. It's a challenging approach because this runs completely counter to our way of thinking. It's a lot more work for Mom and Dad to move beyond the report card. But at the same time, isn't the investment worth it?

3

Create environments where intrinsic motivation grows over time. This happens when healthy adults share their passion for the process of learning and the mystery of something like the scientific method. Help youth formulate their own hypotheses and support them to prove or disprove those hypotheses.

4

Circling back to number one, ***look for ways***

where the child can make a difference in his or her area of interest. This creates magic in several important ways. First, it helps the child develop a powerful sense of self by making a tangible difference. Youth want to do authentic work. If you lay out ten real hammers and ten plastic hammers for a group of five year olds and invite them to grab a hammer, they will always grab the “real” hammer. Second, it helps the child connect with those who share the same interest. A mutually supportive relationship can occur.

5

Parents can give a great gift to their child by talking about the child's experience in school with other adults where the child's interest is at the focus of the conversation. I encourage them to do this when the child is within earshot of the conversation. The child's heart swells, knowing Mom or Dad is speaking the truth AND is on my side!

6

Finally, don't allow youth to become grade focused but rather help them understand the value of a solid academic foundation and doing excellent work. Academic success opens up opportunities for youth. But it's critical that academic success happens in a context where getting good grades is a distant byproduct and where the pursuit of key interests is the focal point. Many youth are derailed when well meaning adults create grade-focused environments.

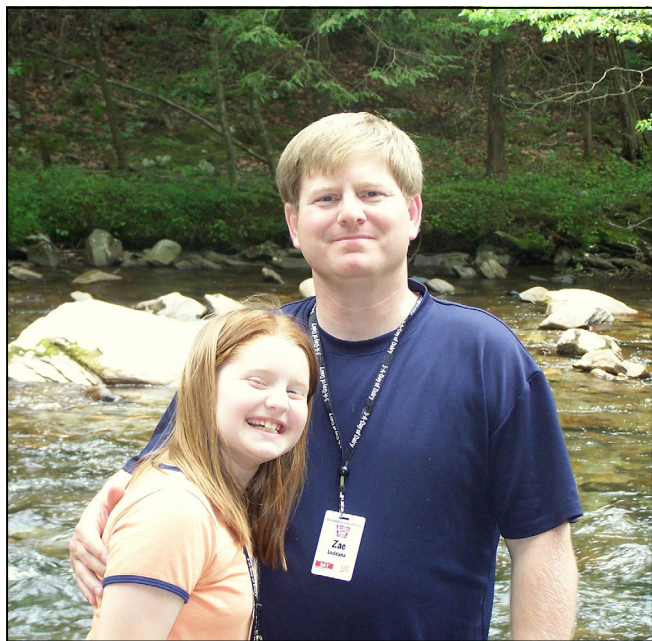
What's the acid test? Ask children how their parents, teachers, and other adults monitor their progress at school. If the answer is limited to the report card, the adults have a lot of work to do. The answer should be focused on the support of the child's interests. Yes, a solid academic foundation is crucial but it's done in the context of something that's real for each child.

Let's work together to keep that sled moving from an early age.

For youth,

David

■ MENTORING GEMS



▲ **ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.** The author and his daughter enjoy the great outdoors.

The Anthropologist in the Dollar Store

BY ZAC BURSON

Standing on a foot stool and stacking snack crackers, he didn't look much like the people I'd seen in the encyclopedias or any National Geographic feature. White shirt and wide tie askew, he reached high on his tip toes to get the last boxes just right. He was the one we had come to see. Head down looking at the cleaning items on the bottom shelf, I shuffled my sneakers, ready to bolt around the next aisle out the door and into the gravel parking lot, rain be damned.

But inside, it was different. I really loved everything about anthropology. I'd worn out the "A" in the World Book Encyclopedia. The librarians in our small town library rolled out shelves of resources and even allowed me behind locked doors into the periodical section. Once there, I devoured every-

thing. There was the discovery in 1974 of Lucy, *Australopithecus afarensis*. I imagined myself a member of the Leakeys -- one of a whole family of anthropologists living such fascinating and purposeful lives in dusty camps in Africa.

Even so, as a sixth grader, I'd developed a teen's reluctance to speak to adults about my interests. And now, this little man in the dollar store terrified me. Worse, my mother had positioned herself behind me, blocking my only escape route. Before I knew what had happened, she'd already cheerily called out to the man, and he'd scaled down the ladder with a smile and offered a robust handshake.

Mother did the talking. I followed along enough to learn he was now *coming over to our home to talk anthropology* and I cringed. *I was mortified*. But somewhere from within, I could feel an insuppressible smile begin to rise and surface.

I don't even remember his name, but I do remember how he artfully shaped the paper mache on the beauty store foam head that had once held a 1970s shag. With great passion, he described the jawline characteristics of *Australopithecus*. And he took great care to get Neanderthal's brow to protrude at just the right angle. All of the information from the encyclopedias and magazines was becoming three dimensional right before my eyes. I half expected the heads to speak. Left to sculpt Cro-Magnon and *Australopithecus* on my own, I entered the social studies fair with a lingering gratefulness at having met someone with such zeal.

Sounds strange now, but those heads graced my bedroom desk well on into high school. Gradually, they gave way to baseball and golf trophies and other assorted trinkets, and eventually made their final voyage and found their resting place in a box in the attic.

More than 30 years later, I marvel at the incongruity of my mom finding the anthropologist in the dollar store. How'd she know what lurked in aisle four? How'd he end up there, anyway? And why did he take time out to help a sixth grader who knew so little in comparison to what he knew?

I never asked Mother, so I don't know what she'd have said. But I'm a father now, and I know this for

sure: I will often risk the embarrassment of my children in the name of challenging them to take healthy intellectual risks.

A most determined educator, my mother had helped me to pursue my interest successfully. I was fortunate enough to have worked alongside the best anthropologist in Eunice, Louisiana, population 11,500.

And I'm still a very lucky guy.

Every day, I work with many people determined to help students learn how to turn their interests into action. I see administrators and teachers hunting down resources for their students. But today, they can work with much greater efficiency and success.

And I also have a better understanding of the motives of the anthropologist store manager: ITP mentors having similar powerful, positive effects on the lives of thousands of students. But, in fact, these volunteers often have a much more profound and lasting impact than the intelligent and gracious gentleman who mentored me on that rainy Saturday. I see ITP teachers and the parents of ITP students making a point of showing students how to pursue their interests successfully, even to the point of risking the embarrassment of their children and students in providing such support.

What's more, we still find mentors in circumstances almost as serendipitous as my story of 30 years ago. Just last week, one of our most experienced Merck mentors, a pharmacology researcher, made a match with one of the students in my community. It didn't surprise me that she'd chosen to work on a science project. However, I *was* surprised that she'd chosen to work with this particular student, as he is studying a terrifying, but as yet obscure plant. In her first message to Tim, she shared how she'd once worked with the Nature Conservancy and had studied invasive plant species in Hawaii. Her message made it clear that she's happy to help a student find ways to battle the world's most obnoxious weed, *salvinia molesta*, an aquatic fern that doubles its size in just four days and turns lakes into green carpets devoid of fish.

What's different today, however, is this: because the Merck mentor has an easy way to volunteer, we didn't have to search the dollar stores -- or even to

scour the Internet -- for a scientist with the time or the inclination to help my two students. The scientist came to

I have to believe that she would have been an early adopter of the medium, making sure each child had the resources and the mentor he or she needed to explore even the most esoteric interest area.

us. And the students aren't looking for an escape route, either; they're eagerly cueing up to greet their help.

In 1995, my mother was a principal of a small K-8 school and the Internet was still considered something of a novelty in education. Somewhat ahead of her time, she'd written grants to provide computer technology for her teachers and students, and we often talked about all that we might do when Internet access would be available for our students.

During that same period, David Neils at HP was just launching the first pilot programs that would eventually become our international telementoring program. Unfortunately, my mother passed away about that time and didn't get to see her students participate in anything like telementoring. Nonetheless, I have to believe that she would have been an early adopter of the medium, making sure each child had the resources and the mentor he or she needed to explore even the most esoteric interest area.

As for those heads, the thought of them still brings a smile to my face. And as moribund as it may sound, well, they just might still be there, up in the attic. ■

Zac Burson's Mentoring Gems appears regularly in Telementor. Zac welcomes feedback about this column or your own mentoring experiences. Drop him a line at: zac.burson@telementor.org

5 Questions for ...

Melody Head, *High School Teacher, Dodge City, Kansas*

■ **What are your goals and purposes as an educator?** To facilitate relevant, rigorous learning to the students; to bring in real-world experiences and activities for the students to explore and gain knowledge. ITP is a great tool for this to occur. The students get to work with professionals who will give them direction on how to prioritize, challenge themselves, and learn that it's not always *what* you know but *who* you know. They participate in developing a Career and Education Plan. ■ **In three words, could you describe the ITP experience?** *Inspirational*. It inspires students to dig deeper than just completing an essay. *Challenging*. The mentors don't always respond as the students expect; they respond from life experiences. *Worthwhile*. The more involved the student becomes in the program, the greater the end results.

■ **Any recent highlights?** One student knew he wanted to be a graphic designer, but didn't have the money to attend a four-year university. He decided he'd go to a community college (with limited graphic design) and "see what happens." The mentor redirected the thinking and helped the student make connections at a university known for graphic design. In the Fall of the next year, the student was enrolled, had a job, and was knowledgeable about who to contact for whatever issue needed to be dealt with at the university. That's all just to say: this program can truly change the opportunities available for students.

■ **What direct benefit and value do your students get?** It helps the student think outside the box. There are no set instructions to follow on page "X" and it teaches them a process for learning and career searching. ■ **What would you tell someone about ITP?** This program should be required for all students. It meets all the National Standards for Career and Technical education. For six years, the ITP has been one of the best parts of being an instructor. I get to see the students challenged in a way they respond to! ■



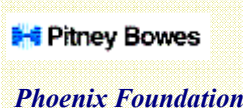
▲ **LARGER THAN LIFE**. High School Teacher Melody Head stands next to a not-so-gentle man from Kansas history: Wyatt Earp.

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