

Telementor

MAXIMIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL™

Inspiring a New Generation

When you plan ahead and think big, you can expand your space to reach out and create positive effects across the globe. Find out how to leverage your personal power.

See page 5

Mentoring Tips that Work

Student not communicating very much? Asking you to do all the work? What if they're asking great questions, but you're not certain of the content area? A few common communication occurrences and what you can do about it.

See page 9

FROM THE FOUNDER

What it Means to Be A Free Agent

See page 2

BY THE NUMBERS

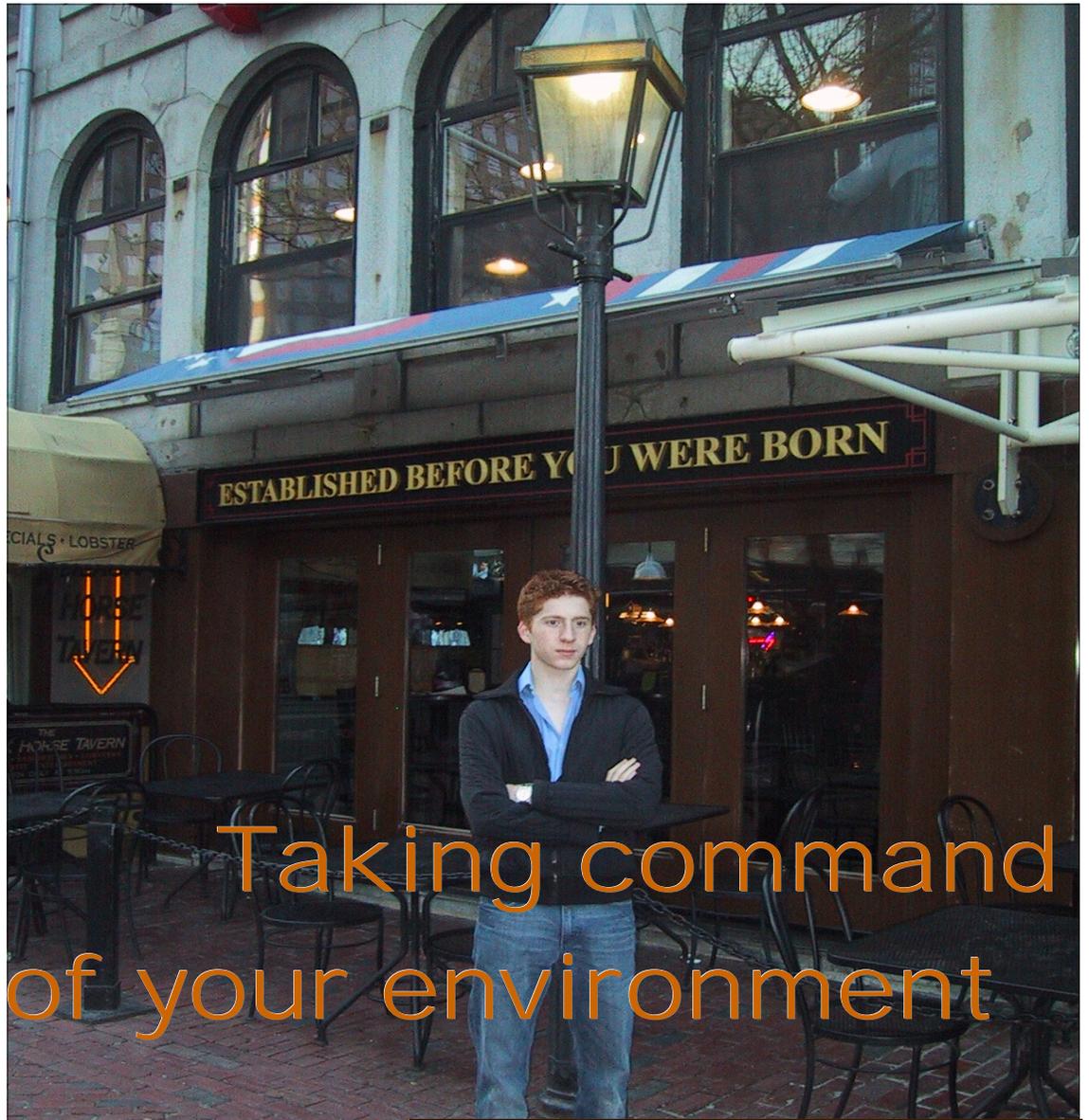
A Constant in Life

See page 3

MENTORING GEMS

Lighting the Fire: 21st-century Students

See page 10



Taking command
of your environment



What about *science* education? Merck Mentor Joe Maglaty responds. See page 8

Inspiring Youth

Where hard work and success meet, careful planning is always a few steps behind it all. That, and a good mentor. Meet a student who has met with success and plans a lot more of it. See page 7

FROM THE FOUNDER

Free Agent or Bust

I enjoyed being a kid. Looking back, I was given



plenty of time to explore the wilds of Northwest Montana, pursue my interest in woodworking, play a variety of sports, torment my sisters, and just lay back and

laugh at cloud shapes. Without adults hovering over my every move, I made plenty of mistakes and learned from those mistakes. My retention rate was at least 100%. Was I unique? No, but the environment created by my parents and the caring adults in my community *was*. Looking back, I was becoming a free agent, and loving every minute. Encouraged to dream, with every ounce of my being I created plans to pursue those dreams. I was a hardwired free agent long before I graduated high school. In real estate, it's location, location, location. With education, it's environment, environment, environment. I couldn't have asked for a better "free agent" environment.

I'm concerned that many youth today are not entering adulthood with the confidence, skills, attitude, support, and academic performance necessary for real success. Our schools continue to isolate youth from the realities of adulthood. The dominant mantra is:

If I get good grades, the world owes me something.

In other words, *I can keep operating under this academic mushroom that has absolutely no connection to the outside world and still be successful.* But this is a flawed equation. Clearly, it *isn't* working. How many students are succeeding at the postsecondary level? Let's look at the Heartland of America: Kansas. Here are some stats: Only 50.3% of students pursuing a bachelor's degree are graduating within six years. Only 36.3% of students pursuing an associates' degree are graduating within three years. When the graduation music fades, are we still clapping a few years later as the college dropout bags our groceries at Walmart?

Yet our education system promotes a tightly controlled and isolated classroom with a vengeance. Grades are too often used as a weapon to

sort and control youth. I've witnessed this firsthand in many classroom visits across the country. This approach entrenches youth in a reactive position where their performance is measured externally and it severely restricts their potential.

To help youth succeed, we must overhaul this environment and create opportunities for them to evaluate their own work and become intrinsically motivated to excel. **Give them a reason to be there. Treat them with dignity and respect. Take their dreams seriously.**

Granted, the problems are complex, but we can act immediately to help our students become free agents. Based on my experience as a mentor this year, I'm thrilled about building on the *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* project. Tommy, a Dodge City High School student I mentored, has three years left before graduation. What does he need to become a free agent? He's impressed me with attitude, skilled communication, humor, and a roll-up-the-sleeves work ethic. But he can make a quantum leap given the opportunity to do the following:

1. Explore some of his own heart-felt interests.
2. Determine how to maximize his time left in high school.
3. Sort through post-secondary opportunities.
4. Forge strong relationships with top professionals who represent his field of interest.
5. Tackle real issues in the field he's pursuing and possibly get school credit for his efforts.
6. Ensure he is well connected with at least one or two top alumni from his post secondary school of choice.

These are simple things, for sure. But acted upon, they would put Tommy *light years* ahead of the competition. If he adopts this strategy? *He's in demand.* And he's a free-agent youth with (ironically) *more* time to enjoy what's left of his childhood.

I've invited Tommy to consider launching a new project that will focus on the first steps in this process. I'd be honored to work with him again. I hope he grabs the bull by the horns.

Meanwhile, I'm going to lighten up, lay back and enjoy a few towering cumulonimbus, lenticular, or stratus formations.

For youth,

David

Telementor

MAXIMIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL™

JOURNAL of the
INTERNATIONAL
TELEMENTOR
PROGRAM

David Neils
Founder/Director

Zac Burson
Program
Coordinator

Victor Rivero
Editor/Writer

www.telementor.org
3919 Benthaven Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80526
Direct: 970-206-9352
Toll Free: 877-376-8053
staff@telementor.org

The International Telementor Program facilitates electronic mentoring relationships between professional adults and students worldwide, and is recognized as the leader in the field of academic based mentoring.

© 2005 ITP. All Rights Reserved. TELEMENTOR and MAXIMIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL are trademarks of the International Telementor Program. For permissions and reprints, please e-mail staff@telementor.org

ON THE COVER:

John Otrakji. (See p. 5)

BY THE NUMBERS

TOP FIVE REASONS TO MENTOR WITH ITP:

5 “As with anything, the more you learn, the more you learn there is to learn. ...it is a continual two-way, circular process of communicating and learning.” *Veteran Mentor*

4 “My attitude toward the future is positive and ambitious.” *Student*

3 “One day a student may have had a bad day, but just a few words from their mentor can change their behavior and give the student another outlet to express themselves.” *Teacher*

2 “Having a mentor meant a lot to me. She helped me in a lot of ways to find myself.” *Student*

1 “Telementoring has been one of the few constants in my life!” *Mentor*

“Some of the students are very impressed to hear some of their mentor’s childhood stories and realize that this could be them someday.” *Teacher*

HELP LINE

SCIENCE TRIPS

www.pbs.org/wghb.aso

A nice variety of information on science. Learn about great scientists and inspirational scientific discoveries.

STUDENT NEWS

www.aolatschool.com

The *Washington Post* has produced a child-friendly version of their online version. Current events, fun interactive surveys and more.

THE RIGHT NOTES

www.mhopus.org

The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation supports music education. Have a look at what they have to offer and you might find something that strikes a chord.

SI, SE PUEDE

www.google.com/language_tools

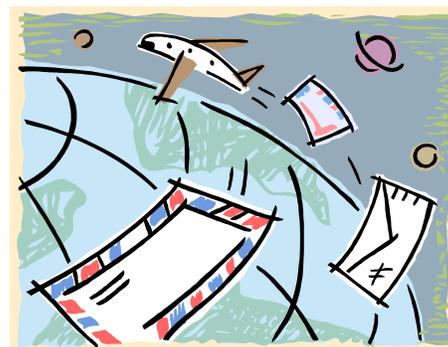
Don’t know Spanish? You do now! From one of the most used web sites in the world comes a tool that puts you into communication with that world. Careful, it’s addicting!

FLY THE PLANET

www.keyhole.com

This site is amazing. Talk about a magic carpet ride! Fly nearly anywhere on Earth as if you were in a plane looking around. You’ll have to see it to believe it. The better the computer, the better the experience.

ITP Mail Bag



Flexible Volunteerism

I’m sending you this e-mail to let you know how much I enjoy being a Merck volunteer for the International Telementor Program. It’s a very easy and convenient way to volunteer your time and to help young people foster a love for science and learning in general. I’ve had two telementoring experiences and have enjoyed them both immensely.

My first experience was telementoring a middle school student from Dodge City, Kansas regarding the scientific theory. Her project was a success and we both enjoyed the process. I basically offered her encouragement and provided a few Web sites to help her complete her project.

My current telementoring project is with a middle school student from Dodge City, Kansas. His research project is to write about technology in the 1980s. They get a kick out of what computers and video games

(continued next page)

(continued from previous page)

were like then.

The projects are very diverse and include everything from science projects to managing finances and future career choices. It's a flexible form of volunteerism in that it can be done from my desk and consists of about two e-mails per week. The projects are generally 6 weeks in length and I get to select which project and which student to work with. The students are very enthusiastic and appreciative.

My current telementoring project ends in two weeks and I'm looking forward to my next telementoring activity. I'm so glad that Merck offers a volunteer opportunity that is so flexible, yet benefits

young people so much.

Sincerely,

BARBARA ANN VALINOTTI
Senior Project Trainer
Merck

Write to us! We'd love to hear what you think about mentoring, about being mentored, about having mentors assisting the students at your school. Write to: staff@telementor.org

JOIN THE **WINNING TEAM** OF MENTOR ORGANIZATIONS!

Current ITP sponsors include:

The City of Fort Collins (Colorado), HP, Agilent Technologies, Thomson Financial, Merck Institute, Cinergy, Sun Microsystems, Pitney Bowes, George Lucas Educational Foundation, MasterCard, Stewart Environmental Consultants, EDAW, Rotary, Duchossois Family Foundation, Phoenix Foundation, and Poudre Valley Health System.

Find out how your group, organization, company or foundation might get involved in helping our youth.

E-mail: staff@telementor.org or call : **(970) 206-9352.**

They'll be glad you did.



Pitney Bowes



POUDRE VALLEY
HEALTH SYSTEM



Stewart
Environmental
Consultants, Inc.

invent

Phoenix Foundation



CITY OF FORT COLLINS

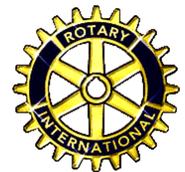
Duchossois Family Foundation



Agilent Technologies



CINERGY
the power of change



Anyone Can Do It

Inspiring Youth: How a Single Student Can Change the World—and Does

There's a new definition of success happening these days. Philanthropic and altruistic pursuits are blending with business acumen to form the 'social entrepreneur'. And if you're a student, don't think you have to wait until you've graduated from college (or even high school) to make a difference.

BY VICTOR RIVERO

Want it. Plan it. Do it.

While this may have echoes of a new soft drink commercial or an athletic shoe advertising campaign, it's actually an attitude of success worn by more than a few middle and high school youth these days. They're working hard to take command of their environment. With an inspiring new 21st-century way of looking at things, they've proven that if you want something, you have to *make it happen*. And in doing so, it's never too early to start.

In fact, "There are a myriad of opportunities that will come across to youth who have this approach. It can happen time and again for anyone, with a little bit of help," says David Neils, Founder and Director of the International Telementor Program (ITP).

Take for example, 17-year old John Otrakji. If it weren't for the intensity of his manner, you might swear you saw a bit of a magical gleam in his eye. On a recent Spring Break, milky-complexioned with dark-red locks, John comes home and gives his mom a hug. He's just flown 1,000 miles and over a few time zones, but there's a quiet alertness to his measured, almost serious countenance.

Yes, he goes to high school in Europe. But what appears impressive now, went more like this earlier: Years before, with persistent desire, meticulous planning and measured application steps to make it that far, he was eventually accepted into a prestigious Swiss boarding school. Now, this too, is just another part of John's apparently charmed life.



DESPITE ALL SIGNS. John Otrakji knows there is more to life than what there seems to be. Through the ITP, he is working on an economics project involving research into Mali's education system. At 17, John is a self-described "social entrepreneur" and despite any challenges, has worked hard to make opportunities happen.

Really, he just has a proactive mindset.

While his mom, naturally very effusive and warm, smiles at the sight of her only child, like her husband, she keeps a comfortable distance from the expanding aura that is John's universe. "I'm very proud, but really, I've had very little to do with it," she says with remarkable humility. "He's a very bright young man, but he's been that way for a very long time."

While it's always nice and sometimes appears rapid, John's is not exactly an overnight success. For example, at 12, he was dubbed an "Internet prodigy" by the *Wall Street Journal*. But well before he arrived at that point, he had been sharpening up his Web skills for quite some time.

Further, one might be amazed to learn that John is a seasoned journalist (he's interviewed more than his share of artists, actors and industry leaders). But

(continued next page)

Inspiring Youth: Changing the World

(continued from previous page)

through his Web site work, he saw and seized on opportunities that weren't definite and only later came about.

His earlier work laid the groundwork for his being named, at 15, one of "20 Teens Who Will Change the World". Then, in the accompanying *Teen People* magazine photo shoot, he's actually getting a bit of a sideways hug from Hillary Duff.

But there's more to it than good looks and brushes with celebrity. While John may be changing the world, it's not something he *hopes* he might someday do. What seems like easy success is the result of an innate desire to succeed that anyone has, coupled with careful planning, knowing where to go for help and undying persistence.

MENTORS AND PROACTIVE LEARNING

While it would be nice to say that it played a central role in honing his proactive mindset, the ITP has been one of the many resources upon which John draws. The program actually flanks and further encourages his attitude. Reaching out is something in his nature. Helping others is his end goal, and the ITP can't help but encourage this in all students.



YOU, TOO. John Otrakji does his homework so he can enjoy the rest of his life. As a student leader, he was recently invited to a forum with some of the world's top executives. But his opportunities are created, and they are created through planning ahead and getting help to make the opportunities appear.

As for John, he believes it is possible for youth, with a plan and some help, to shape the world from their computer at home or school, or even without a computer, and he doesn't mind setting the example. As he deftly corresponds with his *tele*-mentors, he uses them for guidance and to forward his aims. But being a proactive student, his eyes aren't focused on the correspondence.

The International Telementor Program has been one of the many resources upon which John draws. Reaching out is something in his nature. Helping others is his end goal, and the ITP can't help but encourage this in all students.

It may appear that John has his eyes on what's at hand, but if you lean in and begin to examine the way he looks at things, you'll see that in fact, he's always honing a plan, looking ahead – and thinking big. *Really* big.

For example, when he thinks about education, he's not thinking about where he might go to college. For John, that's actually a narrow view. "Education is one of the areas to which debt relief could be applied, this was discussed at the G-8 Summit in Davos 2005," he notes. He would know: John was doing his homework. Day by day as it went on, he scrutinized via the Internet the famous annual summit that brings together the top leaders of the industrialized world.

Exchanging messages in a secure online environment with his mentor Pam Woodrow, a Hewlett-Packard executive and a brilliant planner in her own right, John is able to develop a simple yet thoughtful approach to a problem of world-scope.

Working with his mentor, through his ITP project John hopes to: 1) highlight the most likely sources of debt reduction, and 2) address the potential impact of the redirection to fundamental education in the east-African nation of Mali.

In just such a careful fashion, John has taken project-based learning that seems tailor-made for an academic

mentoring program like ITP and, with just a bit more of an angle and a good push, lifted it to new heights. From there, it becomes a bit of a game.

John writes in his project description: "The purpose of this project is to investigate the effects of debt reduction on the nation of Mali." To do that, he will determine the size and sources of Mali's national debt, that is to say, "determine the conditions of the loans ... interest, term, etc., and to determine the amount of interest that could realistically be forgiven by the most likely sources."

Meanwhile, John intends to examine the cost and structure of Mali's educational system, or as he puts it, "to research the literacy rates and determine the current educational institution status, or current budget."

Then, he'll examine and propose ways in which the best use could be made of interest rate relief. "For example: Is it better to use the funds to attempt to raise literacy rates by means of a broad brush approach – simply pumping money into the current system? Or is it better to develop a seed project where a specified group of students are identified to complete basic education, undertake teacher training for one or two years and have them contracted to teach in rural areas

(continued on page 11)

John Otrakji:

Dream Big, Do Big



OUT IN FRONT. Along with other youth, John hopes to make a difference. One of the resources he has drawn on is help from Pam Woodrow, an HP executive and his mentor through the International Telementor Program.

From an early age, John Otrakji has had big dreams. The ITP is one way he's reaching out and achieving them. At 12, he created an opportunity for himself to attend the Oscars; at 15, he was named by Teen People magazine as one of the "Top 20 Teens who will Change the World".

Among his many carefully crafted plans that led to larger success:

- To help promote the Taiwanese movie, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* to Western audiences, a then 12-year-old John created a professional, comprehensive multimedia online presence. When Sony execs took note, they worked together to propel the movie to wide acclaim in the U.S. and abroad among teens. He personally interviewed director Ang Lee and published his interview online.
- Later, because of his efforts, John was interviewed by John Lippman of the *Wall Street Journal* where his Web site URL promoting other films was printed.
- John is the founder and creator of www.cablejump.com, a Web site which highlights film and raises awareness and money for a number of charitable organizations including: Doctors Without Borders, USA Freedom Corps, Tsunami Relief through Mercy Corps and Oxfam, Millennium Development Project and the Literacy Site online.
- As cablejump founder, John took every opportunity to meet with and interview a long list of Hollywood celebs.
- At 16 and a Davidson Young scholar, John was selected to attend, as one of 25 Leaders of Tomorrow, the Bentley/TIME Leadership Forum bringing together leaders from the worlds of business, technology, arts and entertainment, and philanthropy to explore how social responsibility can be profitable in today's business environment.

But from here, and with assistance from ITP mentors, his dreams only get bigger:

- John plans on attending the next G-8 summit in the fall of 2005.
- He dreams of interviewing former president Clinton if he can arrange a meeting.
- U2's activist lead singer Bono, along with John, is another proponent of debt-reduction; John hopes to meet with him as well.

John considers himself among a new breed of self-described "social entrepreneurs", mixing business, marketing and meaningful humanitarian causes. With careful planning, a keen interest in his activities, and a larger purpose to all his actions, he doesn't think of himself as a prodigy. "Anyone can do it," he says. "And I hope to inspire others of my generation to find their niche, and take charge of *their* dreams, too."

Improving Science Education for Rural Students

While ITP assists students in a number of academic areas, one in particular is science education. Joe Maglaty shares his winning ways when it comes to helping a new generation of proactive students emerge, from wherever they come.

INITIAL CONTACT The Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE) was interested in an electronic mentoring program for Merck employees, as well as our partnership school district teachers and students, to participate in. The Executive Director of MISE was aware of Hewlett Packard's education outreach programs and had heard about the telementor program started at HP. I had just joined MISE when I was put in touch with David Neils to see how the program could benefit Merck employees. I was at HP in California to learn about their education outreach programs when David presented his telementor program to us.

VALUE OF ITP I believe that the value is twofold: It helps our volunteers "give back" to the students, that is, to give students insights into the real world of science and corporate careers that the volunteers did or didn't have when they were in school. Second, it gives students who are not exposed to life outside their community a chance to see how successful people, currently employed in a large corporation, were able to pursue their current careers. Some students will be amazed that not everyone had a vision of working at Merck, some people had other careers before coming to the company. Students need to know that there is some hard work involved in school, and they should know that to be successful, they need to be committed to learning math, science, and other core subjects if they want to



MERCK MENTOR. Joe Maglaty pictured above with his children. Maglaty mentors his own and through ITP, many more.

become a professional with many opportunities.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR MENTORS The chance to "give back" as I explained above, and to have the personal satisfaction of knowing that they may have helped a student get more information about the world around them from this interaction than they could ever get from books in school or from a teacher. Employees can help students, without traveling, from the comfort of their office or cubicle. It also gives employees a chance to work with students on projects that may be part of their work. A student doing a project in science may have the chance to talk with a scientist that is doing cutting edge research in the area. This scientist has access to resources that the students would never be aware of. I think this program has benefits for everyone involved.

EDUCATION TODAY With the National Science Education Standards, and many states adopting science standards, as well as the move towards seeing science as important as language arts and math, I see many more students benefiting from this move now than in the

past. The school districts that MISE has worked with over the past 12 years have shown significant improvement in the ability for students to learn and understand science in elementary and middle school. As we continue to test elementary students in science in a way that they are familiar with, that is, an open test with a given hypothesis whereby they design and execute experiments to prove or disprove that hypothesis, we will get a better understanding as to how they are learning, how teachers are teaching them, and what we can do to improve science education.

CHALLENGING PROBLEMS ITP allows students who would not normally be able to talk with business people, executives, and scientists the chance to work with these people to explore options for their future success. Students in rural areas have their world opened up by finding out what options are available to them outside their environment and what they have to do to become part of this world if they want to pursue a future there. Real people who have accomplished a lot can share their experiences with these students in a way that would not normally be available to them without the ITP.

FINAL THOUGHTS I've had a lot of positive feedback about the ITP from Merck employees who continue to participate in the program. Many are happy to help and they get a wonderful feeling that they've been able to help students pursue their future plans, if the students are willing to do what's required of them. ITP opens up the world to students who only know about life in their local community. ITP brings the reality of rural life through the eyes of a child to scientists and business people who don't realize the limited resources available to these students. Unfortunately, Merck cannot provide a mentor for every student in rural America, but I feel proud of the number of

Telementoring gives students who are not exposed to life outside their community a chance to see how successful people, currently employed in a large corporation, were able to pursue their current careers.

Merck employees who are helping students realize that they can change their own future by following some simple recommendations made by their mentors. *TM*

MENTORING TIPS THAT WORK:

TOO LITTLE STUDENT COMMUNICATION Ask the student a short, simple question. Have a look at their interests and relate it to something that would be real to them. Ensure you get an answer to the question, and when you do, acknowledge the student heartily. Still a problem? E-mail his or her teacher with some words of praise for anything the student is doing right, but include a brief mention that you'd love to hear from the student more regularly in order to make the most of the experience.

STUDENT IS ASKING YOU TO DO WORK When a student is asking you to do their legwork, there are a few things to consider: they are smart, they are resourceful, they need to stay honest, they need to be encouraged to do the work themselves. If they've already demonstrated a willingness to produce, you might reward them with some minor assistance. But find a way to turn it around so that *they* get it done. The more they produce, the higher their confidence will soar, allowing them to tackle additional challenges.

NOT SURE OF THE CONTENT A student asks you some technical questions that you don't know the answers to. Acknowledge them for asking. Don't miss an opportunity to encourage them. It's easy to focus on how you'll answer, but before you do, notice how they just asked a great question and let them know that. Then, tell them you don't know and direct them to a place or places they might find some answers. Get excited about their exploration of the subject, and *let them know* you're excited for them!

Lighting the Fire

21st-century Students

If you have reached this column, you have undoubtedly read about John's remarkably proactive approach to learning and life. He and a few other ITP students have exemplified the skill that the "free agents" of the 21st century will exhibit. More than ever, students are responsible for developing their own skills and leveraging them to identify opportunities and solve problems.

ZACH
BURSON'S

MENTORING
GEMS

John sees a nexus where few do, and he views his interests and talents as the solutions to problems. It was no great leap for him to envision intersections among fields with almost antithetical goals and rules – education, marketing, government, politics, technology, and humanitarianism. As our lead article illustrates, he's turned his marketing acumen to a greater purpose.

St. Joseph School of Shreveport sixth-grader Ally finds connections and sees opportunities everywhere. Animals (and people) will benefit from her unique vision. Ally looked at a project on making her school more accessible as a perfect way to explore the needs and abilities of service dogs which make life easier for thousands of Americans. She received support from service animal professionals and school communities and created a plan to accommodate both owners and animals.

Upon being chosen as one of ten members of The *Shreveport Times* All Academic Team, Hollie used the forum to challenge school leaders to help students assume personal responsibility for becoming lifelong learners. She warned against student reliance on external motivators and assessments: "For years, seeing the first letter of the alphabet placed on a sheet of paper called a report card was supposed to motivate students to concentrate on their studies," she says. Hollie borrows her motto from Yeats: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

As a high school student, she has applied her talents as a speaker, writer, and teacher to create opportunities to minister to inner city youth as a missionary in New Orleans and New York. The university she'll attend this fall is just one of the many places she has learned. She is not going there to "be educated." She'll use her university time to improve her ability to minister to youth, espe-

cially young women.

A few years ago, Zach connected his interests in microbiology and travel to identify problems with the quality of drinking water on commercial airplanes. He then tackled an even more significant issue as he set his sites on harnessing microbes to create alternative fuels. Read how he's charting his own course in "*Alamo Boy Is Flying High*" at http://www.telementor.org/pdf/Zach_Article.pdf.

One of the largest growing categories in the 2000 United States Census was the number of individuals indicating that they had "some college, no degree." *The New York Times* series on education highlights the "College Dropout Boom" – a disturbing trend we've examined in previous issues of *Telementor*.

Many low-income teenagers know few people who have made it through college. A majority of the non-graduates are young men. Some come from towns where the factory work ethic ("*Get working as soon as possible!*") remains strong, even if the factories themselves are vanishing. Whatever the reasons, college just doesn't feel normal. (*New York Times*, May 24, 2005)

Why is it that college, and by extension, the pursuit of lifelong learning, "just don't feel normal" for more youth? We want to help adolescents develop and implement meaningful projects and create loftier goals regarding their knowledge and abilities. As they go forth, today's youth will not find as many opportunities for lifelong employment and job security as their parents did. The globalized economy has overturned many notions of building successful career paths that dominated the 20th century. More than one CEO has indicated that his corporation will "send work to wherever the revenue is." Students must become more self-directed and self-reliant.

Despite these challenges, we still have a great deal of faith in the importance of the work we are doing. Ally, Hollie, John and Zach are already skilled project managers who can collaborate effectively with peers. They'll drive their professional advancement. They know their own strengths and weaknesses. They spark positive synergies by building formal and ad hoc coalitions and mentoring relationships. They exemplify creativity, and they make use of all of the tools and resources at their disposal to implement their plans. They will be effective 21st century adults.

Feedback? Write to: zacburson@telementor.org

(continued from page 7)

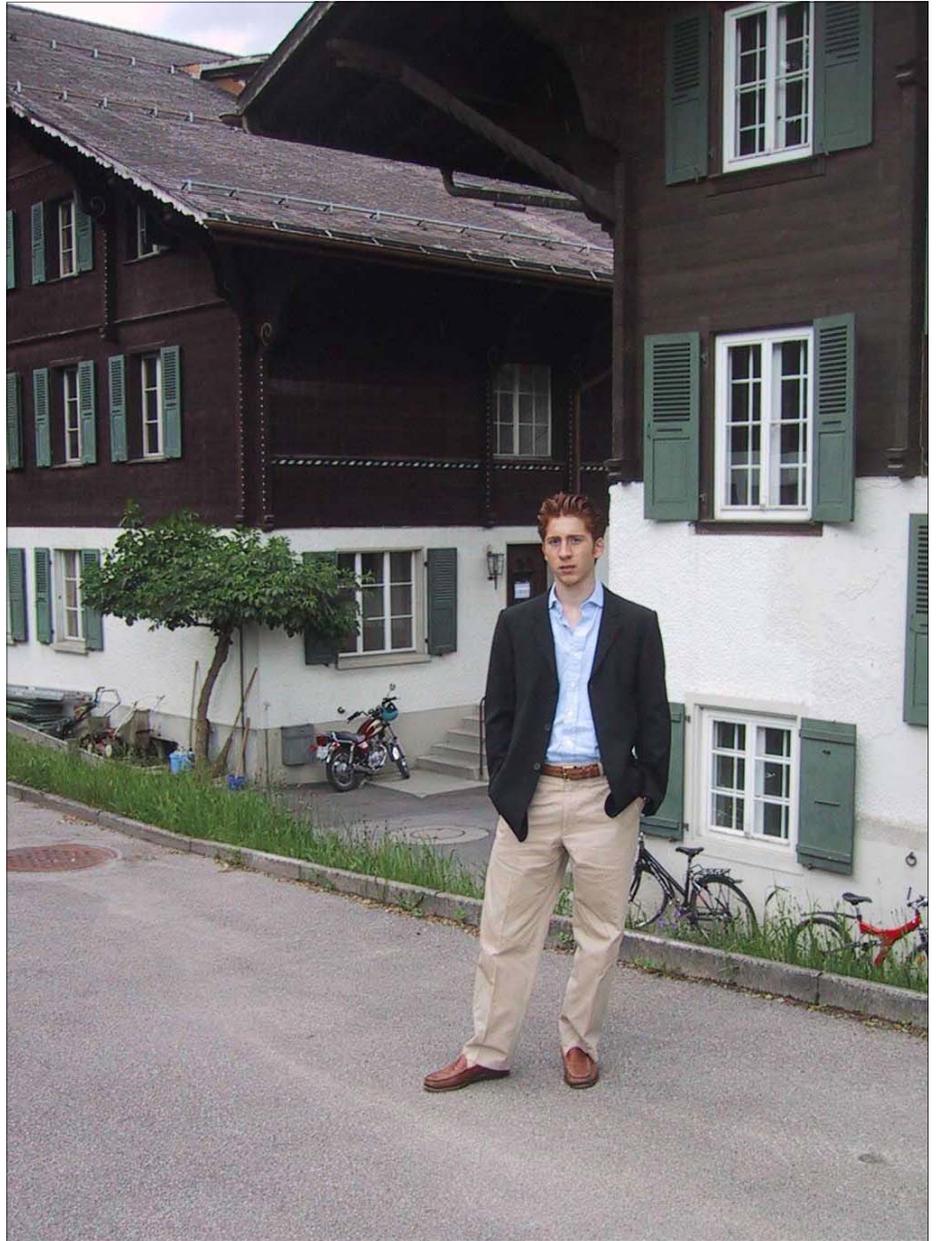
(respecting tribal boundaries) for a period of time?” he asks thoughtfully.

Allowing for possibilities as his project progresses, he leaves open a third route that he calls, “Other options as a result of the research.” Finally, John will use his project to pose the question: “What are the potential economic outcomes of various proposals?”

Further, as an addendum, he writes, “And proposed next steps.” (You get the idea that this means he might give the president of Mali a call, consult with the country’s ministers, or minimally, stop by the United Nations in New York to submit and see to it that his resultant proposal goes through.)

Everything described above John dubs “Project Fulcrum.” If you were paying attention in physics class you might understand that a fulcrum is that utilitarian, triangularly represented object strategically placed underneath the length of a linear object to lift a mass with minimal application of force. On the playground, it’s the middle of a teeter-totter, or see-saw.

More than child’s play, the ITP is helping to leverage the brilliance that lies within students around the world. The ITP assists in honing leadership, and in creating thoughtful leaders, no matter what level a student is at. “While John’s project might be commendable in itself, he’s not nearly finished, nor are we,” says David Neils, ITP Founder and Director. “Our world could use the results such a project as John’s implies, and a lot more students who care to plan ahead, get help from mentors, think big thoughts and ask questions that have the power to lift us all up.” *TM*



BEYOND BORDERS. John Otrakji, 17, stands in front of his school a thousand miles from home. Working diligently on his International Telementor Program project, he hopes to inspire other teens with the reality that they, too, can make a difference in the lives of others, no matter where they are, or from where they come. With the right help, they can decide to change conditions in the world, create a plan, and get it done. Write: staff@telementor.org

Hopeful

Every morning I wake up
I'm hopeful for a good day
I step out side
And breathe in the fresh air
I'm hopeful for the bright sun
At school I see the boy I adore
I'm hopeful for a blossoming love
At home I look at myself in the mirror
I'm hopeful for my mother's beauty
That I do not see in me
Yet I'm still hopeful
That She sees it in me
As I listen to my music
I'm hopeful for such a beautiful voice
That the world would listen to
Doing my homework
I'm hopeful my grades are doing well
Before I get ready to sleep
I'm hopeful for a beautiful dream
Because to me
All of my hopes and dreams
They're all just fantasies
With out all of it
Life is just a grim cloudy day
Sleep doesn't come easily
Because my fears tend to leak out
That's why I'm always so hopeful
Hope is the only thing keeping me
Keeping me here on earth
If I had no hope
My life would not exist
Only my spirit would linger along with the wind
I'm always hopeful
Hopeful that I'll never give up
Hopeful that the last thread of hope
Will never break away

—poem and art by
Jennie, Grade 7, Dodge City, Kansas

visit

www.telementor.org

Submission of student work for Telementor is welcome and encouraged.
Write to: staff@telementor.org