

# Johnny Wilson: Mentoring still works

By Johnny Wilson | Posted: Tuesday, June 2, 2015 8:29 pm

A few months back, Bobby Washington of Great Oak Youth Development Center wrote a column asking folks to step up and become mentors through our countywide Mentoring Works initiative. He wrote that the selfless act of giving some time to young people could actually save some lives. I do believe that many of you in the community heard the call.

The Mentoring Works initiative started with community youth programs and service providers in a room asking what can we do to give more assistance for our youth. With guidance from our Cumberland County Schools Superintendent Frank Till, and Executive Director of Student Services Natasha Scott, the answer was well in reach - mentoring.

Research still promotes that mentoring is the most effective way to impact a youth's life for a positive path. So, where are we with Mentoring Works? It is working. The Find-A-Friend program of Fayetteville Urban Ministry has seen a two-fold increase in mentors this past year. Some of the mentors sport business titles such as district attorney, chief editor of a magazine, sergeant major and teaching administration, just to name a few.

More important, the school system and the partnering agencies have all seen an increase in volunteers and mentors. I have said it for years and will continue to say that the Fayetteville Community is called the "All-American City" for a reason. We have passionate folks that know how to step up.

While we are honored to recruit, train and connect some of our community's most notable citizens, we understand that some of the best mentors are those quiet and humble servants who don't always get public recognition for their work. The only thing required for you to be a successful mentor, that is, one who positively impacts the life of a child forever, is that you care enough to invest authentic respect and kindness in the life of one child.

This all leads to a powerful connection, but what's misleading is that we think the child is the only one who grows. While we certainly need many more mentors at the Find-A-Friend program, I want to encourage reader to reach out and mentor a child in your community today.

Shauna Hopkins, the Find-A-Friend coordinator, does a fantastic and effective communication training that illustrates how to listen and empower that you are mentoring. Shauna and I have given this training several hundred times and each time we are refreshed. Why? Because we have adults - prospective mentors - leaving the training and saying "we all have something to give and share not only with a young person, but with everyone."

While this call may seem daunting to some, I want you to know that it's more natural than you think, and it is more necessary than you know. For those who are not sure of how to begin, I have compiled these Seven Tips for How to Impact, Serve and Survive as a mentor:

Passion. Being an energy-giver rather than an energy-taker. Having a laid-back attitude gives you no voice or opinion. Act as if you are watching yourself walk in the room, house or job.

Loyalty. Being committed to the vision and overall vision of others. Different goals for different folks but commitment makes those same folks achieve together.

Integrity. Being able to create trust from your peers, clients, nonbelievers, haters, family and others. Show up, follow up and stand up. Folks hear what you say but they respect what you do.

Carefulness. Observe, pay attention and be cautious without judging. Just because it didn't happen to you, doesn't mean that it didn't happen.

Team player. Committed to others' success as well as your own. (Philippians 2:3: "Don't act out of selfish ambition or be conceited. Instead, humbly think of others as being better than yourselves. Don't be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others.") In order to receive you must give.

Emotional intelligence. People skills. Listen, learn and observe from not only your experiences but from others as well. (Proverbs 2:9-11: "For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.")

Teachable. Willing to learn new things (accept instruction). Stay open-minded, stay consistent and learn from failing. Mistakes happen daily but growth and success is legendary.

Remember that talent and treasures can be inherited, but time can only be given to transform a life.

Please go to [www.fayurbmin.org](http://www.fayurbmin.org) to learn about Find-A-Friend (910-483-4661) and Fayetteville Urban Ministry's other outreach programs in the community. For more information about other programs affecting youth that you can get involved with, please visit [www.unitedway-cc.org/projects/mentor-recruitment/](http://www.unitedway-cc.org/projects/mentor-recruitment/) and <http://cvs.ccs.k12.nc.us/>.

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