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United Way releases research in time for National Mentoring Month
'Be a Middle School Mentor' sees positive impact on character, grades

Pittsburgh, Pa. (January 11, 2017) – Just in time for National Mentoring Month, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania's 'Be a Middle School Mentor' initiative released new compelling research about the impact of the program using input from students, mentors and parents. The research, conducted by experts from the Learning Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh, provides a deeper look at how mentoring impacts education, attendance and character.

This year, the program reaches 17 Pittsburgh Public Schools with more than 300 mentees. United Way needs nearly 100 caring adults to sign up as volunteers before the end of January to pair every child in need with a mentor this school year.

"There are still so many students hoping to be connected with a mentor this school year," said Damon Bethea, mentoring projects director, United Way. "After seeing the direct impact mentors are having on local students through this data, we hope more caring adults will be encouraged to step up for a student who is hoping for a mentor."

The evaluation reflects findings from the first seven years of the program. Throughout the study, researchers focused on how 'Be a Middle School Mentor' has evolved; in what ways parents of participating students think mentoring influences their child; how the program impacts mentees' awareness of careers; whether or not the program impacted student grades and attendance; and more.

- **Parent Response:** 100% of parents surveyed responded that their student got into less trouble at school after becoming involved with 'Be a Middle School Mentor.' More than 90% said their student was more positive about school, had better attendance, and seemed more responsible.
- **Relationships:** About 85% of mentors and mentees reported high relationship satisfaction, with 75% of youth rating interactions as highly positive, youth-centered and encouraging.
- **Career awareness:** Around 78% of youth agreed they learned about more career possibilities and the education needed to get there.

- **Attendance:** For each year students participated in ‘Be a Middle School Mentor,’ their attendance was significantly higher than those who did not participate.
- **Grades:** Mentees had higher GPAs than comparison peers for each year of participation. ‘Be a Middle School Mentor’ participants also showed higher PSSA math scores every year of program involvement.

“From this research, it is clear the students in our community need caring role models,” Bethea said. “Our mentors have made a huge impact on their mentees, not only academically, but they have helped build their character, grit and perseverance, as well.”

‘Be a Middle School Mentor’ is part of United Way’s United for Children impact work, which focuses on building strong academic skills and character through relationship-based initiatives and meaningful programs. United for Children programs help local students grow and learn skills to equip them to become successful adults. This research shows the impact a caring adult can have on a local child. United Way hopes to use the information collected to encourage more adults to step up as mentors.

‘Be a Middle School Mentor’ is still recruiting volunteers for the 2016-2017 school year. To find out more, or to sign up to be a mentor, visit www.beamiddleschoolmentor.org.

About United Way of Southwestern PA – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community

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