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**United Way of  
Southwestern Pennsylvania**

**United Way rallies community to mentor local middle schoolers**

*More than 130 mentors needed for United Way's Be a Middle School Mentor program*

Pittsburgh, Pa. (Dec. 10, 2018) – With January's National Mentoring Month fastly approaching, United Way of Southwestern PA hopes to inspire caring adults to sign up and mentor a local middle school student through its Be a Middle School Mentor (BAMSM) program. With support from Key Bank, in its tenth year, BAMSM expanded to include 22 schools across Pittsburgh. West Mifflin is included this year for the first time.

As the second semester of the school year begins, more than 130 volunteers are still needed to match every local student with a mentor who requested one.

"We are thrilled to offer this program in even more schools, but that means we need more mentors than ever to raise their hands. Right now, there are kids who asked for a mentor and do not have one – it is our goal to fill this gap and match each kid with a caring adults," said Damon Bethea, mentoring projects director, United Way. "By signing up with United Way's BAMSM, volunteers can help local kids build character, achieve success academically, and learn new skills. One hour per week with a mentor can make all the difference in a child's life."

Mentoring makes an impact on a child's life. According to Mentoring.org, kids who meet regularly with a mentor are 46% less likely to start using illegal drugs. It also reduces the risk of depression and is proven to help students maintain a positive attitude. Moreso, it effects education. Students with mentors are 52% less likely to skip a day of school, and 55% more likely to enroll in college.

On a local level, United Way sees positive results year after year. From a study done last year, 78% of participating students said they learned about more career possibilities through BAMSM. Overall, mentees in BAMSM are proven to have higher grades than their peers not participating in the program.

"From parents and our mentors, we partner with United Way's BAMSM because we know first-hand that this program is making a difference," said Julianna Sehy, volunteer & mentor coordinator, Communities In Schools Pittsburgh-Allegheny County – a United Way partner agency. "The mentees light up when they see their mentor, and they're ready to focus in on the activities for the hour we're together. It's so powerful to watch the kids grow from 6-8 grade, and the mentors see changes in the kids' behaviors, attitudes and grades."

BAMSM 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.

United Way is recruiting volunteers for the 2018-2019 school year. Community members and local businesses can learn more or sign up to mentor by visiting <https://volunteer.uwswpa.org/>.

**About United Way of Southwestern PA** – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Butler, 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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