

SCARLETT FAMILY FOUNDATION

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Mentoring

You have more to offer than you think

By Tom Parrish, Executive Director, Scarlett Family Foundation

Throughout the past year, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam's, [Tennessee Promise](#) has consistently been in the spotlight. This new program, beginning with the upcoming class of 2015 graduates, guarantees 2 free years of college to every Tennessee student who earns a high school diploma.

The success of the program depends largely on pairing each student with a mentor. To support the 58,000 plus students who have enrolled, more than 9,000 caring adults have set aside their uncertainties, doubts, and fears of not have anything to “offer” these students.

[TN Achieves](#) is leading the mentoring component of Tennessee Promise, and they describe an [effective mentor](#) as someone who “encourages students to reach their potential” and who “lessens the post-secondary intimidation factor by sharing personal experiences.” In recruiting adults willing to “invest 10-15 hours to assist 5-10 high school seniors,” they weren't recruiting experts or individuals with advanced degrees. These recruits are just regular folks who care about education and are willing to sign up, show up and share their personal experience. A recent article published in *The Tennessean*, [Tennessee Promise mentors take life changing roles](#), details a few of the early experiences of these mentors. I salute each one of these pioneers, and I'd like to point out that we all have more to “offer” than we think.

Miriam-Webster defines a [mentor](#) as “someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.” That's a great definition, and it defines “coach” as well, a term many people are more comfortable with. And while thousands of adults are mentoring Tennessee Promise students through the TN Achieves organization, “mentoring” occurs everyday in the workplace and—in my opinion—should occur more often.

Although it was long before TN Promise came about, I have benefitted from the involvement of mentors throughout my career. It was easy for them and incredibly helpful for me, so I've tried to pay it forward on my own. I'm currently mentoring three people. One sought me out while the other two relationships just evolved naturally, based on established friendships and casual career discussions.

The reason I bring this up is because it's easy, it's rewarding, and if I can do it, anybody can (and everybody should).

The meetings are informal, but very intentional. I take notes and check on action items. This holds the mentee accountable because they know I will follow up. I've not been trained as a mentor, and when proffering advice I emphasize that I'm “a survey of one.” They often challenge my ideas and on occasion ignore my suggestions. But these relationships “work” because of this kind transparency, the level of trust we have developed, and the fact that they know I have nothing to gain personally. While this kind of commitment does take some time, breakfast and lunch meetings work great, and we all have to eat!

Even if you think you're not qualified to give advice, your experience and wisdom can be invaluable to a younger person trying to find their way in the world. Think about who has helped you find your career path, then ask yourself where you'd be without them. "Mentoring" and "coaching" present an opportunity both to strengthen our community today as well as shape our collective tomorrow.



To mentor and to be mentored

By Joe Scarlett, from the Nashville Business Journal, March 14, 2014

Several powerful mentors have helped me to grow and learn during my career.

My dad was a business executive who taught me the inner workings of corporations. In my career with Tractor Supply, my predecessor Tom Hennessy was my mentor for more than a decade. When I was an impetuous young man, he helped me evolve into a more mature leader. Tom also explained the importance of seeing the big picture and coached me in how strong values lead to the long-term success of the enterprise.

Later, I mentored many upward-bound leaders, and it's been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Finding a mentor

First, identify what you really want and need to learn, then narrow your focus to a few people who fit the profile. Learn about your target mentor. When you are ready, simply tell your target, either in person or in writing, that you are seeking a mentor and would like to have a discussion.

Most leaders will feel honored and likely will schedule a meeting. Come prepared with your specific goals and a suggested schedule. I recommend one meeting a month at a neutral location. Assure your mentor you will provide an agenda for each session.

Becoming a mentor

Jump at the chance — you won't regret it. If you have been in business for awhile, you will have a myriad of experiences that can be helpful to young folks. You are in a respected position and have much more to share than you may realize. Consider using your successes and failures as tools; both can be instructional for emerging leaders.

I often find myself telling stories, good and bad, that shaped my career. And often my screw-ups are more important in the learning process than stories of success. If you accept a mentorship, don't be surprised if you become more proud of your mentoring than most anything else you are doing.

A highly rewarding process, mentoring is an experience that fills both leaders and students with a great sense of pride and accomplishment.



Become a Mentor - A Shared Opportunity for Growth

From Mentor - Expanding the World of Quality Mentoring

As you begin your journey toward becoming a mentor, you will need to thoroughly understand the role of mentoring. Look at a role you are already familiar with. Most of us have had a supervisor, a boss or coach who

has made a positive difference in our lives. Those people wore many hats. They acted as, delegators, role models, cheerleaders, policy enforcers, advocates, and friends. As a mentor you will wear these same hats.

Mentors understand the need to assume a number of different roles during the course of a mentoring relationship, but successful mentors also share the same basic qualities:

- A sincere desire to be involved with a young person.
- Respect for young people.
- Active listener.
- Empathy.
- See solutions and opportunities.
- Be flexible and open.

As you and your mentee begin your relationship; exploring values, interests and goals, you will find yourself making a difference and having a positive effect on their life. What you may also be surprised to see is that you will be learning more about yourself, too. Mentoring doesn't just affect the young person. Mentoring is a shared opportunity for learning and growth. Many mentors say that the rewards they gain are as substantial as those for their mentees. Being a mentor enables them to:

- Have fun.
- Achieve personal growth, learn more about themselves.
- Improve their self-esteem and feel they are making a difference.
- Gain a better understanding of other cultures and develop a greater appreciation for diversity.
- Feel more productive and have a better attitude at work.
- Enhance their relationships with their own children.

Good mentors are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to the young person, and even to be changed by their relationship. Accept the challenges and rewards of mentoring a young person and experience the benefits that will last each of you a lifetime.

Mentoring: By the Numbers

The Impact on Youth

- Students who meet regularly with their mentors are **52%** less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and **37%** less likely to skip a class. (1)
- Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and **27%** less likely to start drinking. (1)
- 16 million American youth—**one in three**—will reach the age of 19 without having had a mentor of any kind. (2)

The Impact on College Students

- **96 percent of the college provosts** Gallup (4) surveyed believed their schools were successfully preparing young people for the workplace. “When you ask recent college grads in the work force whether they felt prepared, only **14 percent say ‘yes,’**”... And then when you ask business leaders whether they’re getting enough college grads with the skills they need, “**only 11 percent** strongly agree.” Concluded Busted: “This is not just a skills gap. It is an understanding gap.” (3)

- Only **14% of graduates** strongly agree they were supported by professors who cared, who made them excited about learning, and who encouraged their dreams.

[\(1\) Mentor: National Mentoring Partnership - Public/Private Ventures Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters](#)

[\(2\) EY and Mentor Business Case for Private-Sector Engagement in Youth Mentoring](#)

[\(3\) NY Times article by Thomas L. Friedman \(9/4/14\) 'It Takes a Mentor'](#)

[\(4\) Gallup 2013 Poll - 'Life in College Matters for Life After College'](#)

Resources for Grant and Scholarship Seekers

OUR MISSION: *TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO MIDDLE TENNESSEE STUDENTS OF ALL AGES*

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