

It Takes a Mentor

Our Staff's Impact in the Community



South High School Student Symone (left) with her mentor, Katie Thomas, who works in Marketing at Nationwide Children's.

Symone pulls a school desk over to where **Katie Thomas**, her Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families (HNHF) mentor, sits in the back right corner of the band room. She sets her book bag down near the base of the chair and takes out her lunch. It's a Wednesday at noon at South High School on the south side of Columbus, less than a mile away from Nationwide Children's Hospital.

As the chatty pair starts their mentoring session for the week, they talk about all sorts of topics – everything from grades to friends to summer plans. Symone, a tenth grader this year, was matched with Katie, who works at Nationwide Children's Marketing and PR Department, through the HNHF mentoring program.

“KATIE ALWAYS STRESSES TO ME ABOUT BEING ON TIME. SHE'S A VERY GOOD MENTOR,” SHARES SYMONE. SHE'S TAUGHT ME TO OPEN UP TO EVERYONE. I'M KNOWN TO BE QUIET. SHE ENCOURAGES ME TO TRY THINGS AND TELLS ME TO BE MYSELF.”

Symone is one of 26 South High school students who participated in mentoring once a week during the school year. The mentors, all staff at Nationwide Children's from different departments and levels, work with students on post-graduation plans and how to get there, while building supportive relationships through consistent interactions and accountability.

South High School was one of five mentoring opportunities for employees to dedicate their time and passion to kids during the school year through the HNHF mentoring program, now going into its third school year.

In total, more than 150 employees participated as mentors at South High School, Boys & Girls Club, the Harmony Project, Marion-Franklin High School and Livingston Avenue Elementary.



Symone and Katie chat during their mentor session.

“WE CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S LIVES AND OUTCOMES, PROBABLY MORE THAN WHEN WE'RE INSIDE THE WALLS OF THE HOSPITAL, BY GOING UPSTREAM AND MENTORING CHILDREN IN OUR COMMUNITY,” SAYS THOMAS BARTMAN, NEONATOLOGIST AND ASSOCIATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR QUALITY, AND A HNHF MENTOR AT BOYS & GIRLS CLUB THIS YEAR. “AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE.”

Right outside the walls of the hospital, just through the park and across the street, sits another mentoring site, Livingston Avenue Elementary. At Livingston, Nationwide Children's mentors acted as “reading buddies” on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school for first, second and third graders.

Kelly Sheppard, who works as a researcher in the Center for Biobehavioral Health, mentored third-grader Arielle during the school year.

“I remember one day I arrived late because a research appointment had gone well over the usual time,” shares Kelly. “Arielle immediately asked me why I was late. And I felt like I had let her down. It wasn't fair to her.”

Kelly, or Ms. Kelly, as the students called her, explained to Arielle about the research she was doing and how the goal with research at the hospital is to learn things that will help kids in the future.

Arielle thought for a moment and said, “You were helping a kid?... You don't have to say sorry for helping a kid.” And they moved on with the reading lesson.

Lessons like that are invaluable not only for the student but also for the Nationwide Children's mentors. Kelly shared, “Her outlook reminded me that very little goes as planned but when we're focused on the right things, like helping kids, we will figure it out in the end.”

Over half of the students who were mentored at Livingston saw an increase in their mid-year testing score from the beginning of year.

While it's hard to measure and see success in the schools in just one year, the impact on student's lives has been immeasurable. **Michelle Welsh**, coordinator for the mentoring program, says, "We've seen students' grades increase, attendance has gone up and tardiness numbers have decreased in the kids we mentor."

And besides the numbers, it's really the stories that showcase the true influence the Nationwide Children's mentors have made in the community and in the lives of their mentees.

Katie and Symone have met close to 20 times and, in that time, they have developed a regular rapport and lasting relationship. With Katie's encouragement, support and consistent accountability, Symone ended up retaking a college placement test and increased her score exponentially.

"This summer, she'll be attending college classes," says Katie proudly, "And she was accepted into the hospital's new Upward Bound Math and Science (UBMS) program."

When asked if she would participate in the HNHF mentoring program again next school year, her answer was immediate. "Yes," says Symone, with a smile. "Same mentor."

Become a Mentor

Our work is not done yet. You can make a difference in our community and mentor kids just like Symone and Arielle.

3 Reasons to Be a Mentor

- 1 Impact a child's life in our surrounding neighborhoods.
- 2 Build relationships that can change a child's path.
- 3 Meet other Nationwide Children's staff from across the organization.

Sign up for this unique opportunity. Search **HNHF Mentor** on **ANCHOR** to learn more about the mentoring opportunities offered this upcoming school year.

Mentor Spotlights



Manjusri (MJ) Nguyen

*Epic Applications Engineer – Clinical Informatics
HNHF Mentor at The Harmony Project*

My favorite part of mentoring has been the opportunity to speak to so many different students. It's fascinating to hear their stories and see how a common interest of singing through the Harmony Project can bring such a diverse group of students together.



Tifini Ray

*School Health Liaison, Mobile Care Center
HNHF Mentor at South High School*

It's sometimes easy to think we are ordinary individuals with very little to offer. I am convinced that everyone has something that can shine light into a young person's future, even if it is simply our presence.



Steve Swift

*Administrator, Department of Perioperative Services
HNHF Mentor at Boys & Girls Club*

The fine kids in programs like the Boys & Girls Club of Columbus didn't dictate the socio-economic situation they've found themselves in. They don't necessarily have an abundance of people in their circumference supporting them to succeed in life. We can do this. We can help fill this void. We can help these kids in our community.



Yusef Abdul-Zahir

*Nurse Recruiter
HNHF Mentor at Livingston Elementary*

I mentor because I know that I am an example to young African American boys specifically and I want to make sure I am a positive example that leaves an impact on their development.



Janetta Pickens

*Administrative Clerk II, Biopathology Research Center
HNHF Mentor at Boys & Girls Club*

You may be the only positive role model your mentee has in their life to set them on a course of success. It is rewarding in ways that are priceless! ■