

National Teen Self-Esteem Month

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June hallmarks National Teen Self-Esteem Month, a celebration that was started in an effort to battle against the negative self-image that often comes with teenage perceptions. During this month, parents and teachers are encouraged to be positive role models for teens, promote diversity, and foster a positive body image. It's important to remember that this generation of teens will be the next generation of leaders, so making them confident and secure is an important task.

One way that the Delinquency Prevention Council of Jefferson County helps to encourage the positive promotion of self-esteem is through the Juvenile Mentoring Program. Mentoring can help increase a student's self esteem in addition to a student's academic achievement and communication skills. In the Juvenile Mentoring Program, an adult is matched based on their interests with a youth to provide educational, social, and personal support. By helping individuals set goals, participating in community events, building trust in other adults and promoting self-advocacy, mentors make a world of difference in the lives of youth.

Research has shown that mentoring works to reduce delinquency and increase positive self-esteem in the lives of the youth we work with. According to a study found in the American Journal of Community Psychology, young people often attribute their safe passage through the tumultuous years of adolescence to the influence of significant non-parental adults such as teachers, extended family members, or neighbors (Anderson, 1991; Lefkowitz, 1986; Smink, 1990). Mentors are not superheroes, but ordinary people willing to share their life experiences, hobbies, and talents with a young person. Throughout the history of the program, our mentors have built relationships with many youth and have helped raise their self-esteem, praised their accomplishments, and lend a hand to reach their goals.

One mentor commented: *"The mentoring program has been a great experience for my mentee and myself. We have been together for just over a year now. It has been a bumpy road to say the least, but we have really become family, she is like a little sister. She has become more self confident and trustworthy. She is working really hard to correct her decisions from the past. She is doing better in school and with making better friend choices. We spend a lot more than just the required hour per week together, eating out, going to the movies, etc. She is even helping me coach basketball at the local middle school. I have become more in tune with the teenage mind and spirit working with my mentee and it has helped me become a better teacher to my middle school students as well. Her relationships at home are getting better with her Mom and sister as well. Even when things get heated at home, instead of running off, she calls me and lot of times I can get her calmed down and able to talk. This has been a wonderful experience and I thank JUMP for the opportunity to bring us together!"*

The mentoring experience allows the adult volunteers an opportunity to give back to the community by helping teens strengthen their self-esteem within their community and school. The lasting impact of a mentoring relationship can be seen in the success stories of the JUMP Program.

For more information about the Juvenile Mentoring Program, please contact Abigail Hail at ahail@oppinc.com or 920-563-2437.