

2009



# Kids 'n Kinship



**Kinship**  
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Mentoring Youth  
in Dakota County

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Kids 'n Kinship, a 38 year-old mentoring program, the only program of its kind in Dakota County, works to recruit, screen, train, match supervise and support adult individuals, couples and families to befriend youth.

## Mission

Kids 'n Kinship's mission is to provide friendships to children ages 5-16 in need of a positive adult role model.



## Our Focus

We assist children in forming long-term friendships with responsible, consistent adult role models. Through their Kids 'n Kinship relationships, children receive positive attention, experience a variety of activities and develop a sense of self-worth essential to successfully functioning in school, in healthy relationships and eventually on a job. Kids 'n Kinship empowers volunteers, families and youth to maximize skills and resources to build a stronger community.

## Who do we serve?

Of our youth, 42% are Caucasian, 20% are African American, 18% are Multi-racial, 9% are Hispanic, 6% are Russian, 1% are Asian, 1% are Native American and 1% are of other ethnicity.

Over 75% of the children have experienced or witnessed abuse or neglect and others have multiple mental health diagnoses. Several program participants are children of prisoners.

The level of need that we see in families is very high, and issues such as transportation, communication / language barriers, and resources for additional supports other than what our program can provide are present. Kids 'n Kinship is well connected with Dakota County and other service providers and can help families get the specific support they need in addition to providing mentorships.

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## Celebrating a great match!

Carl was shy, anxious and not entirely sure about the situation when Todd and his family came to meet him. Todd engaged Carl with some animal figures Carl was holding. They started talking and Carl decided to see what this was all about. Carl's mom was happy to get to know the new mentor family. That was three years ago – now the match continues to go strong.



On any Sunday, you may find Todd and Carl golfing, dog walking, at the zoo, playing catch or hockey. Activities have changed over the years, from searching for frogs and salamanders to flying a remote control helicopter. Todd wanted to help kids in some way, and a friend from church suggested Kids 'n Kinship. We were exactly what he was looking for: a way to have a positive influence on a child. Todd works for the City of Farmington and he and his family have a new business, The Bat Cage. Carl's mom marvels at Todd – “he is great; very committed, Carl looks forward to every visit with Todd and his family – this is such a positive impact for Carl. Carl knows he can rely on Todd”. She says, “Carl also enjoys being with Todd's wife, Mechelle, daughters Kelsi and Kailee and son Jordan.” Todd has given guidance as well as opportunity – a couple years ago, he encouraged Carl to stick with football and he has gained

confidence and accountability. Todd played football too, so it is fun to share that interest along with kayaking and fishing.

Todd says, “I really enjoy my time with Carl – we have a good relationship and he is a great kid. He is maturing and taking responsibilities – he is becoming a little man. His mom does a great job.” We asked Carl what he likes best about being with Todd. He said, “He is a nice mentor – we like to hang out – watch the MN Twins on TV. I am a Twins fan and so is Todd.” Todd adds, “If there's a pet store on the way to where we're going we usually stop to take a look. We both love animals. I am still a big kid at heart; I am so thankful for Kids 'n Kinship and the service they provide. Carl and I plan on being lifelong buddies.”

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## Program is successful with proven outcomes.

2009 outcome measurements conducted on the youth in the Kids 'n Kinship program indicate that 96% of the youth are reducing their experience of isolation through consistent visits with their volunteer mentor, with whom they are learning new skills, physical activities and hobbies.

100% of the youth have established a positive relationship with their adult mentor. Among the youth surveyed, 97% also reported a reduction in serious incidents or behavior during the time they were matched with a mentor. That is awesome!

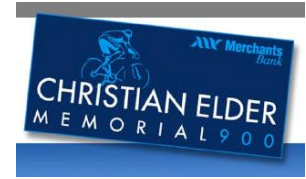
Kids'n Kinship is a 501c3 organization relying solely on contributions from the public.

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## Program Highlights

The 4th annual **Christian Elder Memorial 900** bike ride completed a hugely successful ride this year. Donations and pledges totaled over \$26,000. The Christian Elder Memorial 900 was named in loving memory of John and his wife, Sherry's son.



*“It’s amazing what a memorial can do for a young person’s life and what the young person can do for you.” John Elder, president of Jones, Inc., a Minneapolis-based retail and restaurant construction company.*

### Make a Difference Day:

On Saturday, October 24, Kids ‘n Kinship mentees along with their mentors celebrated National Make a Difference Day by assembling birthday bags for low-income children. The event held at Thomson Reuters was a collaborative effort between Kids ‘n Kinship and Cheerful Givers. This year our volunteers packed 500 bags.



**Spa Ahhh! Fundraiser:** Kids ‘n Kinship was the recipient at a special spa fundraiser hosted by the Burnsville Women of Today on Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>. There were mini spa services for attendees, a thriving silent auction (including donations from some of our mentors) and a delicious brunch. This hugely successful event was held at the Crystal Lake Golf Club in Lakeville. Attendees helped raise \$3,500 toward finding new mentors for children on our waiting list.

**Bowlathon Fundraiser:** Kids 'n Kinship celebrated our **10th annual Bowlathon** at Cedarvale Lanes, where we bowled and raised money for the program! Our thanks go out to all of our donors and sponsors who made this day a great success!



**New Bike Project:** One of our mentors, Rick Anderson, collected, cleaned and repaired bikes to hold a fantastic Bike Sale raising \$1,750 for the program.

**The Local Fair:** Kids 'n Kinship hosted a booth at the Dakota County Fair on August 16<sup>th</sup> for Volunteer Day and provided free admission to the mentors and mentees who volunteered at the booth.

**Annual Summer Outing:** Our Mentors and Mentees attended the Summer Outing at the Y Camp Streefland in Burnsville. The kids were busy hiking, canoeing, swimming, learning archery, wall climbing and enjoying supper together.



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## 2009 Accomplishments

### Growing Financial Support

New funders contributed to the program this past year and fundraisers have grown to help secure needed operational funds.

### Chat Groups Train Volunteers

The Program asked mentors to attend chat groups with their fellow mentors - a minimum of two sessions a year. Chat Groups are offered four times a year. Issues for discussion included poverty and class, school support, and sharing their mentoring experiences.

### Ambassador Program

Recruitment efforts got a boost from program Ambassadors. Mentors volunteered to build PowerPoint presentations, host community events and to speak churches, businesses and individuals about mentoring.

### New Matches Formed

23 *new* matches of youth with mentors were made in 2009.

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## What do all the people say?

### *Mentors say ...*

“If I ever have a question I get it answered quickly.”

“Sometimes it is hard to get her to laugh. Stress in her family is very high.”

“It is challenging, educational and rewarding.”

“It’s hard to explain poverty till you actually see it.”

“Fulfilling experience to make a difference.”

### *Parents / Guardians say ...*

“He likes school better with (mentor) there.” Parent of a school-based match.

“He looks forward to every visit.”

“She is always real excited to see her - she likes the time away from brother and sister.”

“My daughter has been taken off her medications for anxiety. I think this is due to being with her mentor, it makes a huge difference.” Mother of a 6 year-old girl

“She looks forward to every get together and wants a lifelong friendship with her mentor.”  
Grandmother of an 11 year-old girl

“His mentor is a real positive influence, it is really good for him and he has better behavior and more respect.” - Grandmother of a 7 year-old boy

“They have a lot in common and they show respect to one another.”

“He will give up anything to be with them.”

“It's amazing who he is today because of (mentor) guardian, " on a 2 ½ year match.

“He’s starting to grow up - taking on more responsibility with schoolwork.”

## Prevention - What is it Worth?

A Social Return on Investment for Youth mentoring programs study was recently completed. The study was a joint effort through the Wilder Foundation and the University of Minnesota. What they found is that investment in mentoring programs pays off. For every dollar invested in youth mentoring, the social return is estimated to be \$2.72.



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## Contributors

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Burnsville and Shakopee Jaycees

### Fundraising

Christian Elder Memorial 900  
Annual Bowlathon  
Bike Project  
Kids Day America  
Spa Ahhh! Event

