



Kinship

Kids 'n Kinship 2008 Annual Report

Kids 'n Kinship, a 37-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.

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.

Kids 'n Kinship in the Headlines . . .



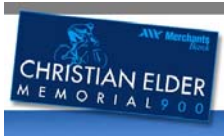
Mentor **Mike Zenner** is pictured here receiving the **2008 Hands of Twin Cities Be the Change** Award at the Mall of America Volunteer Expo on February 23, 2008.



Kinship mentor, **Kaylee Unverzagt** was crowned **Miss Minnesota 2008**. Kaylee is a junior at the University of Minnesota, completing her major in Journalism and Mass Communications. Along with her lifelong friend Allie, she mentors Emily age nine, Kaylee says, "I think it's important for adults to offer their time and help children to

grow – to become the best they can be! I want to help young kids learn how good it feels to achieve their potential, whether in sports, school or conquering a personal challenge. Often, that feeling of empowerment stays with them through their whole life."

Program Highlights



The 3rd annual Christian Elder Memorial 900 bike ride, named for John and Sherry Elder's son, had another successful ride starting May 29th and ending June 14th. Donations and pledges of over \$26,000 were raised. John Elder, Sam Elder and Jay Saterbak rode 900 miles on the Katy Trail in Missouri to Apple Valley through some of the rainiest weather in decades. They were challenged by washouts and trails underwater. Their faithful friend Gordy Clough always pilots the motor home and provides delicious meals at the end of long ride.



The Birthday Bag Blitz – Kids Helping Kids was held in October at the Thomson Reuters office in Eagan. Mentors and their matches helped assemble 549 birthday bags to help other children have a happy birthday. (Pictured here with Miss Minnesota)

Kids 'n Kinship hosted a booth at the Dakota County Fair for the first-ever Volunteer Day.

Kids 'n Kinship provided leadership and participated in the Nonprofit Network in Dakota County.

Kids 'n Kinship continues to participate in the "Give Kids a Smile Day" coordinated by the Minnesota Dental Association for children whose families cannot afford to pay for dental care.

Kids 'n Kinship offered a booth at the Kids Day America event in May at a Lakeville middle school staffed by board members, and program participants.

Our 9th Annual Bowlathon and Silent Auction event was held at the Cedarvale Lanes in Eagan in November. Lockheed Martin sponsored the event with matching funds coming from the Northern Dakota County Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Our mentors and their matches along with family members spent hours bowling and snacking on chips and pop. We can always count on involvement from various volunteer groups from the local churches and high schools and lane sponsorships from local businesses.

Kids 'n Kinship was involved in many community partnerships: Salvation Army, Healthy Communities and Family Services Collaboratives, Children of Prisoners program, Mentoring Partnership Minnesota quality standards work and Community Programmers.

What makes a great match?

Fun, reliability, respect and friendship! The fun part is the activities they do and the silliness and jokes that go along. Reliability is very important for both mentors and mentees. According to mom Tunisia, Dominic and Valeri are an excellent match for Deonte. They are really good mentors and are reliable. When they are out together, Deonte has wonderful behavior. This shows his mentors how much he respects them.



Here, Deonte, Valeri and Dominic celebrate their two-year anniversary. There is lots of laughter and joking with these three. Deonte's favorite thing? Everything. Valeri says, "There are really too many favorites to name, but any list must include playing games, hanging out, playing pool, biking, going to

the cabin for smores and wake boarding. Through mentoring we learned we are excited to have kids ourselves!" We all enjoy the Kids 'n Kinship outings and have plans for go-carting this summer.

Deonte also has advice for new volunteers and children – "Don't rush it. I had to wait a long time for mentors and it was worth it, I got the best!" Dominic and Valeri get to learn the latest dances and songs – Deonte is the cultural trendsetter in the relationship. Dominic gets to learn all the newest lingo, which is helpful for the fifth graders he teaches.

Exciting Things are Happening . . .

New Matches Formed

23 youth were matched with mentors in 2008 for a total of 80 current matches. However, the need for mentors is increasing. There are still more than 65 children on the waiting list.

Chat Groups

The Program asked mentors to attend chat groups with their fellow mentors - a minimum of two sessions a year. The sessions are offered four times a year. Issues for discussion include culture, race, gender and sharing their experiences.

Ambassador Program

A new Kinship program is beginning in 2009. Mentors are being asked to volunteer at community events or spend time speaking to churches, businesses and individuals about making a difference to a child, thus helping to recruit new mentors.

Growing Financial Support

Through new mentors entering our program, we have been able to develop

relationships with new companies, foundations and churches and secure new funding.

Board Fund Raising

Board members devoted time last year to assisting in several fundraising events, writing grants, researching new funding sources and building relationships with community leaders and supporters.

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Sam's Club/Walmart
SKB Rosemount Community Trust
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Uponor

Foundations

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Leo Buscalgia
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Nash Foundation
Steve Leuthold Family
Thrivent Chapters

Organizations

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1776
Apple Valley American Legion
Burnsville Lions
Burnsville Women of Today
Christus Victor Church
Eagan Rotary
Family Service Collaborative 194
Family Service Collaborative 196

Fundraising

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

Increased in-kind donations

Many groups and organizations assisted the program through donations:: Tix for Tots - tickets, Health Partners - holiday help, Barnes and Noble - books, and Berean Baptist Church - match boxes.