

Invest in a Child's Life: Be a Mentor

By GUS BILIRAKIS

Every child has the potential to achieve greatness. Unfortunately, not all children receive the support and encouragement they need to realize this potential.

The designation of January as National Mentoring Month seeks to achieve three goals: build awareness of mentoring, encourage people to become mentors, and close the mentoring gap. It is estimated that more than 15,000,000 young people in the United States do not have a caring adult in their life to serve as a foundation for success.

The successes of mentoring are unquestionable. According to the National Mentoring Partnership, a mentored teen is 73 percent more likely to raise their goals, 59 percent more likely to get better grades, and 46 percent less likely to do drugs.

Instead of idly learning of tragic juvenile statistics, we have the ability to strengthen our businesses and communities by investing just one hour a week in our youth.

With more than 4,000 mentoring programs across the nation, in communities, of all sizes, I encourage you to use this month's awareness initiative to set the tone for rest of the New Year. Consider becoming a mentor and help a child realize and achieve goals they never thought possible.

More information on mentoring programs can be found at www.mentoring.org.