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Mentoring Takes Giant Step for Mankind

Online program connects busy professionals to students for career development advice and more

How can students prepare to enter an increasingly competitive workforce? How can businesspersons share their experience with youths without compromising their busy schedules? How can youths who are at risk of dropping out of high school be motivated to remain in school? The answer is E-Mentoring, the high tech collaboration between e-mail and mentoring!

The E-Mentoring program was developed by Peckham, Inc., in partnership with Michigan Rehabilitative Services and the Ingham Intermediate School District, as a component of the LINKS program. Through the LINKS program, each student selected undertakes a vocational assessment, creates an action plan, performs career research on his or her chosen goal, and participates in job shadowing experiences that correspond to his or her career interests. E-Mentoring continues the link between school and career by partnering students with an E-Mentor, someone who enjoys teaching, coaching, and being a role model and is a professional in his or her career field of interest.

Peckham's E-Mentoring program is a modification of traditional mentoring, utilizing computer technology to connect adult role models to at-risk youth. Through the E-Mentoring program, the student and

News From CARF

CARF 101 and 202 added to the fall lineup!

Due to popular demand CARF ECS has scheduled an fall training in the beautiful Raleigh Durham, North Carolina.

CARF 101, October 1–2: Come and learn more about the CARF accreditation and survey processes, including a full review of the 2007 CARF standards. This comprehensive and engaging training session will highlight examples of organizational conformance to the standards as well as effective business management and service-delivery practices. This session is highly recommended for any first-time organizations preparing for the

the mentor enter an online correspondence in which the student posts messages based on different vocationally related projects, and the mentor responds with advice and resources. E-Mentors and students communicate via a secure web portal developed by Peckham that ensures anonymity and security. Peckham's E-Mentor specialist monitors the website to ensure the appropriateness of the postings and to provide help and support for students and mentors. To supplement the personal connections and information between mentors and students, Peckham also created a research-based curriculum with projects and activities to guide this communication and encourage skill assessment, goal setting, tolerance for differences, and the use of community resources.

One particular activity requires the student and E-Mentor to share some personal characteristics and work-related values and examine how these might fit into a particular work environment. Upon completing the exercise, a student said, "[My E-Mentor] was helping me think of things to share about myself, and we couldn't stop laughing! It was really a hard activity because it made me do a lot of thinking. But I really had a lot of fun doing it!" Peckham's E-Mentors have offered advice, consolation, and encouragement as the students post messages dealing not only with vocational interests, but also related personal issues such as family relationships, dating, and violence in school.

Serving the high schools in Ingham County, E-Mentoring provides services to a diverse group of participating students. E-Mentoring program students come from rural and urban areas and large and small schools and possess career interests that span the spectrum from technology to medical to construction. Pekham's E-Mentors are all community businesspersons and are recruited through local service clubs, business organizations, and word of mouth. E-Mentors include government agency directors, financial officers, physicians, and skilled trade professionals from local construction and manufacturing companies. The diverse range of E-Mentors reflects the variety of interest areas of the participating students.
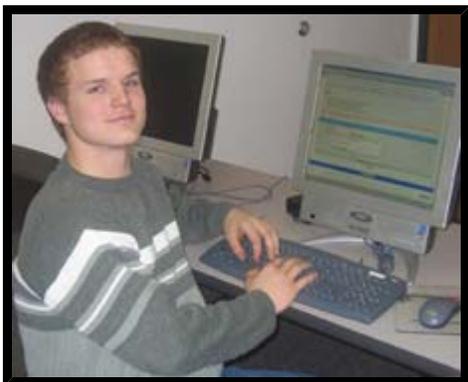
Since the inception of the program, almost 50 students have shared educational and professional goals, questions, and interests with a caring adult. Program results show that students who complete the program stay on track to graduate. Peckham's E-Mentor specialist constantly reviews participation, and new activities are added based on student and E-Mentor feedback. The LINKS program currently has a

accreditation survey process or organizational contacts new to the accreditation process.

CARF 202, October 3: Serving as a "sequel" to the CARF 101 format, this advanced training is designed for accredited organizations preparing for re-survey or those organizations that have participated in the CARF 101 format and desire more information regarding preparing for an original survey. This intensive and dynamic training session provides "hands on" support in developing and implementing plans, policies and procedures needed to demonstrate organizational conformance to the standards.

To register or find out more information visit us online at our Educational Opportunities section.

Promising Practices issues now archived online!

Do you remember a past article coming out that you'd like to forward on to a colleague? Did you just join Promising Practices and want to see issues we covered in the past? Well, now you can! Old issues of Promising Practices are now available online. Visit archived issues at www.carf.org/ newsletter and follow links to past issues. Past issues are categorized by topic so you can easily find articles of interest.

Putting Out the Good Word: Some

participation rate of 93 percent, and several students are exceeding the program participation requirements. Most important, 78 percent of the students who have completed the program are either still in school or have graduated from high school six months after program completion. This is a huge accomplishment for students previously identified as at risk for dropping out of school.

Today's high school students are faced with a lot of choices and have shown great promise when offered guidance. One of the graduating seniors in the E-Mentoring program is a young man named David*. David expressed an interest in fashion and hair design and was matched with a mentor who specialized in retail sales and business management. David and his mentor established a great relationship on the website, which led to the sharing of valuable information concerning David's future plans and what he could expect in his areas of interest. Not only was David able to get great information about the field of personal care, but he also was able to share with his E-Mentor some of the challenges he has faced by being an openly gay student in high school. Due to some of the social pressure that he had faced, David contemplated quitting school. With the encouragement of his E-Mentor and other caring adults in his life, David made the decision to stay in school and graduated from high school this June. Learning how to deal with the pressure of being different and not letting others make him feel uncomfortable has prepared David for some of the issues that will come up as he seeks to create his ideal salon. In his words, David describes his dream place of business. "I do have a desire to own my own salon, but it wouldn't just be a salon. It would be like a miniature mall almost. It would contain food, clothes, shoes, jewelry, music, and a dance floor. Then in the back would be the 'paradise' part of it, the salon. I don't want it to be just an ordinary salon. I want it to be somewhere young teens can come and hang out and express themselves."

The benefit of E-Mentoring is clear in David's story, as well as the individual stories of all students who participated in the program. One of the graduating seniors is off to college and has had extensive dialogue with his E-Mentor concerning freshmen issues, including roommates, study habits, and making new friends. Another senior is joining the workforce and plans to work and go to school at the same time. Her E-Mentor has given advice on time management and goal setting.

The strength of any community can be measured in how well it prepares its young people to make the transition from student to worker. Peckham's E-Mentoring program has proven that it can be a successful tool in the development of our future workforce.

If you would like to learn more about Pekham's E-Mentoring Program, contact Ann Paruch at aparuch@peckham.org.

Information about the Promising Practices Series

We are offering a series of short articles on a variety of promising practices that CARF surveyors have observed during surveys from 2004 to the present. There is no particular order that we will follow in presenting this series of short reports. The purpose is not to rate one organization over another, but to encourage U.S. and Canadian community providers to dialogue with one another and to encourage creative solutions to individual service designs and organizational business practices and thereby achieve effective and positive results in each organization's community.

Although there are indeed a number of ways to approach conformance to a standard, what makes organizations given an exemplary rating stand out is their professional and strategic response to an observed service or business need, always designed with input from their stakeholders and based on those individuals' quality expectations.

We hope you enjoy the series. We encourage you to contact the identified representative in the article to get more information about their services.

*Name changed for privacy.

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