



City of Wilmington

News from the Office of Mayor James M. Baker

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Mayor Baker Launches New Mentoring Initiative **Aimed at Helping City Kids**

City Employees and City Residents Urged to Become Mentors

Wilmington Mayor James M. Baker today asked City employees and City residents alike to help make a positive difference in the lives of Wilmington's young residents by stepping forward and joining a new mentoring initiative. Mayor Baker is launching a new drive for mentors to supplement other mentoring efforts currently underway in Wilmington and the rest of Delaware; Mayor Baker hopes to ultimately identify 500 additional mentors to supplement the scores of mentors already working with youths in the City.

"Many organizations in Wilmington and Delaware have had mentoring programs for years, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and Connecting Generations," said Mayor Baker. "Recently Lieutenant Governor Denn launched a new state-wide effort to find mentors. As part of our desire to support these efforts and reinvigorate the City's own corps of mentors, I am asking City employees and City residents to seriously consider becoming mentors."

In late 2008, Mayor Baker issued an executive order establishing the Greater Wilmington Mentoring Commission (GRWC), a group of business, educators, and community leaders charged with the coordination and facilitation of mentoring programs for school-aged children. The Commission is working to establish a citywide network of mentors to provide school-based and community-based mentoring to help youths build academic, social, and life skills.

"Our children represent the future of the City of Wilmington," said Mayor Baker. "If our City is to continue prospering in the future, we must provide our youths with the guidance they need to become well-educated, responsible, and productive citizens who are able to achieve their full potential. Time and again, one-on-one mentoring from positive role models has proven its value in keeping children in school, promoting higher learning, and decreasing the likelihood of drug and alcohol use and other undesirable behaviors."

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City residents interested in mentoring should contact either Big Brothers Big Sisters at 998-3577 or Connecting Generations at 656-2122. City employees can enroll in the City of Wilmington's mentoring program through the City's Department of Human Resources. The City of Wilmington will conduct mentoring recruitment sessions for city employees on July 30 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Municipal Complex (500 Wilmington Avenue) and on August 6 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Louis L. Redding City/County Building (800 French Street).

Mentors can be either school-based or community-based depending upon their personal schedules. Although there are no special requirements to be a mentor other than a desire to have a positive impact on a student's life, all applicants to the program must undergo a background check and complete the mandatory training process. Once trained, mentors meet with their assigned student one hour a week. Typical mentoring activities include having lunch together, working on homework, playing games, or just talking. The focus of all activities is to form a supportive relationship with the child.

With the approval of their supervisors, City employees who become mentors are granted one hour of time away from the office between 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Eight City employees are currently mentors; five are school mentors at Bancroft Elementary and/or Kuumba Academy, and three are community mentors with Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Mayor Baker hopes to enlist another 50 City employees for the school or community mentoring programs. Along with Bancroft and Kuumba, City employees are also being asked to mentor at Stubbs and/or Elbert Palmer.

"Mentoring is critical to help reduce Wilmington's drop-out rate," said Mayor Baker. "Two of the school districts serving City students, Red Clay and Christina, report a drop-out rate of 7.1% and 9.3% respectively, with City students comprising the vast majority of all drop-outs. Countless studies demonstrate that the higher a City's drop-out rate, the higher the incidence of juvenile crime."

"Our City's new mentoring initiative will provide the guidance and support our City's young residents need to improve their self-esteem, develop self-confidence, strengthen their education, and reach their full potential," added Mayor Baker. "The program will go a long way in helping improve the quality of life not only of the participating youths, but of the entire Wilmington community."

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