

MISSION STATEMENT

Vision- that every youth caring for a chronically ill, injured, elderly or disabled family member will achieve success in school and life.

Mission- to increase awareness and provide support services for youth caregivers and their families by connecting healthcare, education and community resources.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are matched according to their skills, interests and abilities.

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Community Outreach
- Clerical Assistance
- Fundraising
- Social Networking
- Video Experts
- Writers
- Public Relations
- Basic Computer Skills

Dear Volunteers:

Welcome back to all our volunteers who escaped the Florida heat this summer. This has been a busy year so far. Our M.A.C.Y. program now has 25 mentor-mentee matches and our United Way grant supporting the program was just renewed. January is National Mentoring Month, an annual designation observed each January, the focus being on how we can all work together to increase the number of mentors to make sure young people in our communities have dependable people to look up to and follow in their footsteps. We are always looking for additional mentors. If you are enjoying the experience, refer a friend or co-worker!

Our annual Hearts & "Soles" gala was held in early October. The theme this year was Casino Night. Thanks to all of our amazing volunteers who helped in so many ways from creating the decorations, setting up the venue, checking in our guests, providing the entertainment, taking photos and promoting the event. A special thank you to *Debralyn Belletieri* under whose direction this became the awesome event that it was!

Our Holiday Celebration for youth caregivers and their families will be held on Sunday, December 22nd at Safe Schools Institute. This year we will again have two back to back parties starting at noon and then at 3:00pm. Each youth caregiver can invite two family members to the festive event. Volunteers help in a variety of ways from registration, wrapping gifts, helping the students select gifts for family members, serving lunch, staffing a crafts table, setting up and packing up at the end of the event, providing crowd control and "floating." If you would like to volunteer, please contact us at 561-391-7401.

And finally, I wish all of you a most festive holiday season and Happy New Year! Thanks for all that you do for our youth caregivers!

Marcy Bezark

Goodies from our Hearts and "Soles" Casino Night
Tami Lustig and Ashanti enjoying an outing together

Christerlane at Hearts and "Soles" Casino Night with her sister Chrisbe. Christerlane received the Bomar award for an essay contest.



MENTORING

Do you know where the word "mentor" originated? In a recent article published in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, mentorship is described as "an educational tradition embedded deeply in human experience, going back at least 2,800 years to one of the foundational works in world literature, Homer's *Odyssey*." The story goes as follows:

Telemachus, son of Odysseus, concludes his teen years at a time when his father is missing, his family is besieged, and he is struggling to understand his place. But he finds assistance. Wisdom, personified in the goddess Athena, takes the form of Telemachus' private tutor to advise his pupil to embark on a journey of discovery. On this voyage, Telemachus comes of age, learning by himself-but with his tutor's expert guidance-the capacity to effect change in the world. This voyage into adulthood is guided by someone with a role

MARY NUTT



It has been over three years since Mary became involved as a volunteer driver and mentor at AACY. "As CFO for the Schmidt Family Foundation, I was inspired by AACY's mission to identify and support students who are caring for ill or disabled family members. After meeting

Connie Siskowski, whose passion for these families is contagious, I was on board to help however I could."

Mary explained, "I was fortunate to grow up with parents who strived very hard to let us be kids and have fun for as long as possible. They sheltered us from many of life's challenges including dealing with a loved one's illness or disability. I remember vividly how tough growing up can be with peer pressures to fit in. I could only imagine how difficult this would be for these families and how each is doing the best they can to provide their children with the most normal childhood under some challenging circumstances."

Mary first attended a bowling party at Strikes for our youth caregivers and met the student who would become her mentee. She said that initially they spent time walking around the mall and going to the library. "I encouraged my mentee to expand her horizons and explore new experiences to find out what is important for her. I introduced her to several biographies that I thought would be inspirational to her about people who overcame tremendous obstacles and found passion and meaning. We also explored opportunities for advanced education after high schools in her chosen field. And lastly, we purchased a leather notebook for journaling as a way to sort through her emotions and daily anxieties to find where her truth and happiness lie.

deemed so critical that we honor that contribution down to this very day. His teacher's name was **Mentor**.

The article continues to explain the role of present-day mentors. "A mentor is someone who shares knowledge and imparts understanding with those less experienced. The mentor sends the mentee on a journey of discovery, guiding but not steering it. Mentors can take satisfaction in their mentees' growing capacity and eagerness to steer for themselves."

Thank you, volunteers!

Each year, The Independent Sector estimates the national value of each volunteer hour for the 63 million volunteers in the United States. This year, the dollar value is **\$25.43**, up 3% from last year. If we translated the 5,000 hours given by our AACY volunteers in the course of a year to a dollar amount, it would save the agency **\$127,150!**

Mary has driven other youth caregivers to events such as Camp Treasure, a day at Sugar Sand Park, a bowling sleepover at Strikes and a cooking class at Boca Helping Hands. She told me "I know that the parents were so appreciative that if not for the volunteer drivers, their kids would not be able to enjoy these events. One of the parents called to thank me for taking his son to the cooking class. He said that his son absolutely loved it and couldn't believe that they gave everyone a basket of food and a crockpot."

I asked Mary what she would tell potential volunteers about AACY. She answered, "This is a fantastic way to really make a difference in someone's life and future. I believe that being able to talk to someone about the daily struggles caring for a family lightens their load. It's exploration and exposure to different experiences that make you able to problem solve and look at a challenge from different perspectives." Although her mentoring experience ended, she felt that mentoring this "beautiful young lady" brought her closer to the entire family. "They have faced more trials and tribulations than I have faced in a lifetime and I am amazed how resilient and positive they are. I hope that maybe I've made a small difference."

Dear Volunteers:

After 4 1/2 years as Volunteer Manager for AACY, I will be retiring. I plan to pursue volunteer opportunities for myself and continue playing tennis with my two teams at Boca Pointe.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at AACY with an amazing staff and dedicated, caring volunteers. I am so pleased that our mentor program, M.A.C.Y., has grown to reach full capacity.

Thank you for all that you do for our youth caregivers! It has been my pleasure working with you.

Best wishes,

Marcy Bezark

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