

# Meet the Mentor: Jon Bellonio, Calvin Leete Elementary



Jon Bellonio Photo courtesy of Dani Howard  
**Dani Howard**

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Last fall, Jon Bellonio was coaching hockey after school and looking for something else local to do during the day. Bellonio is a very active guy and enjoys playing a lot of sports, including his adult hockey league. Guilford Youth Mentoring (GYM) matched him with a 4th grade boy at Calvin Leete School and they spent this entire school year playing sports together once a week.

The son of two Marines, Bellonio said he doesn't remember Long Beach, California, where he was born, or living in Japan when he was one. His memories start when he moved to Guilford as a three year-old and his parents left the Marine Corps. His mom now teaches at Baldwin Middle School and his dad works for Sikorsky.

The second of four children, Bellonio graduated from Guilford High School. Later, he earned a degree in kinesiology from New England College in New Hampshire. He took a job as a physical education teacher at South Kent Prep School, also coaching soccer, hockey, and golf. Most recently, he returned to school full-time to get his K-12 PE certification and a master's degree at Wesleyan University. He started substitute teaching in November while he was studying, and now he is searching for a PE position.

The majority of GYM mentors are recruited by other mentors, and Bellonio was no exception.

"I'm dating Sandy Whelan's daughter. It was the obvious choice." (Whelan is a long time mentor and GYM board member, along with her brother, Joe Goldberg.)

"You don't join the program for yourself, but it really benefits both you and your student," Bellonio said. "I got to spend time hanging out and playing sports with him. It was really just another gym class for him, but it was fun for me to see him so excited about our meetings. Plus, the kids in his class would call out 'Mr. Mentor!' when they saw me coming. That was pretty cool."

In GYM, mentors stay with their mentee all through school until the student no longer needs or wants a mentor, one of them moves away, or the student graduates. Unfortunately, Bellonio's mentee moved away this summer.

"I was definitely more sad on the last day than he was," Bellonio admitted. "GYM has another active boy waiting for me in the fall. Hopefully, my new job will allow me to keep mentoring."

GYM currently has about 160 mentor pairs in all seven Guilford schools, but there is always a list of students waiting for a mentor and they always need more men. If you can see yourself mentoring or you'd like to help support our program, please call Guilford Youth Mentoring 203-453-2741 ext 269, email [solomonb@guilfordschools.org](mailto:solomonb@guilfordschools.org), or visit [www.guilfordmentoring.org](http://www.guilfordmentoring.org).