



Meet the Mentor

Rob Howard • A. W. Cox Elementary School

Rob Howard is a tall, recreational basketball player. He has a master's degree in business administration and is an analyst at a Guilford financial company. And he's getting a little education from the fourth grade student he mentors at A. W. Cox Elementary School.

Howard says with a big smile, "He's a couple of years older than my son so I get a little preview of what's going to come."

Rob Howard has been a mentor for the last six years, ever since his eldest son was born, and he says the greatest pleasure in mentoring is "getting to hang out with an elementary student, see a smile every time we meet, see someone always happy to see you.

"When the first boy I mentored moved up to third grade, I didn't tell him I was coming. He hadn't seen me during the summer. I showed up. He ran over and gave me a big hug."

Howard is one of more than 165 volunteers mentoring kids and youngsters of every age for an hour a week in all Guilford schools. And, according to teachers and parents, often helping to change and improve their outlook, attitude and lives.

Like many mentors, Howard is not particularly trained for the volunteer work he does – except by the very student he mentors.

He went to high school outside of Baltimore and then to Swarthmore College where he majored in engineering and economics. He worked for seven years for Baltimore Gas and Electric, and then got his MBA at the University of Texas.

He met his wife, Dani Howard, "at a wedding." She is from Washington State, and when they lived in Texas, she volunteered in a program that supported kids

They moved to the area almost ten years ago. He went to work as an analyst at Prospector Partners LLC. Dani Howard volunteered to help the growing mentor program. Eventually that got her husband involved. He says, "Dani was a big factor. She kind of got me into it. OK, she made me do it, but I'm really glad she did."

His first mentee was a boy in the first grade, and he worked with him until the boy got through the fourth grade and his family moved away. "He was pretty active: kickball, Wiffle ball. He didn't talk that much, but I enjoyed meeting with him, and then his family moved to North Carolina."

Now Howard enjoys playing board games, chess and The Game of Life with his latest mentee, although he admits that, despite his master's degree, the kid usually wins. "And we talk. Where'd you go on the weekend, what movies have you seen, or even about subjects he's working on in school."

The toughest part of mentoring from Howard's point of view, is getting there. "You have to get out of the office, put the work aside. But you make it, and after you spend 45 minutes with him, you realize, this is good.

"I moved up with this boy. He's now in the 4th grade. I'll stick with my guy as long as he wants—and get the smile, maybe even win more of the board games, and talk a little about this and that, and even about life."

To find out how you can become a mentor or help support our program, please call Guilford Youth Mentoring (203) 453-2741 ext 269, email us at solomonb@guilford.k12.ct.us or visit our website at www.guilfordmentoring.org.