



Guilford Courier “Meet the Mentor” January 30, 2014 by Wendy Renz

January is National Youth Mentoring month and the perfect opportunity to act if you vowed to do more community service in 2014. Perhaps they can make it a team effort like Doug Danaher and his colleagues at Guilford’s Stone Agency. Five out of seven of the firm’s employees are currently Guilford youth mentors and consider it a company “perk” to be able to leave the office for one hour per week to visit their mentee during the school day. Doug and his business partner, Rob Oman, have each had several mentors and the relationships have all been different depending on the student’s personality or interests. They enjoyed it so much that they recruited co-workers Kris White, Pattie Stone, and Alex Conover to join the program. Remarkably, three out of the five mentors aren’t even Guilford residents! “They are happy to help a child in need and give back to the community where they are employed,” says Doug. “They come back to the office after spending time at the school with their mentee reading a book, playing a game, doing an art project, or even shooting some hoops and they are rejuvenated.”

For those who might be hesitant about Guilford Youth Mentoring’s weekly school mentoring sessions, the mentors at the Stone Agency don’t find that a problem. The schools are happy to work around mentors’ schedules and can arrange for you meetings during a study hall or the child’s lunch period. Everyone can carve out one hour and it’s the “easiest hour of the work week,” remarks Danaher. The one-on-one mentor/mentee relationship is a lot different from a parent/child relationship since it’s stress free with no strings attached. Mentors are there to be a friend, to listen and offer carefully selected advice only when asked. Mentors have their mentees’ undivided attention, and the welcoming smiles that greet mentors when they walk through the door are priceless. Many mentoring relationships start in elementary school and the special bond often continues as the child matures through the high school years.

The Stone Agency is happy to be one of the Guilford Youth Mentoring’s sponsors and the company’s principals are gratified that employees see the opportunity to participate as a job benefit. “It’s a win-win for everyone involved” say Danaher and Oman, “and we encourage other individuals and businesses to get on board.”