

LinkedIn



Young People Still Need to See Hope From Their Mentors

This post was written as part of the #Mentor series, which is tied to LinkedIn's student editorial calendar. Follow the stories or write your own.



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As you may have noticed, during the month of August, LinkedIn shone some much needed light onto the concept of mentoring. Through their #mentor series, many individuals – mentors and mentees, alike – shared their thoughts on either the people in their lives who have influenced who they are today or how they are paying it forward by mentoring another.

As Chief Executive Office of Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC, I could not be happier that LinkedIn chose to initiate this conversation and bring mentoring to the forefront, and I commend them for doing so. The truth is, when Ernest Coulter, a clerk in the New York City children's court, began the mentoring movement on December 3, 1904, he certainly was not aware of the incredible legacy he was destined to leave behind. Rather, he addressed a group of community leaders and businessmen at a local men's club with a very modest dream. He spoke of a boy who was expected to be convicted by the courts and

sent to a reformatory for 18 months.

“There is only one possible way to save that youngster,” said Mr. Coulter. “And that is to have some earnest, true

man volunteer to be his big brother...to look after him...help him do right...make the little chap feel that there is at least one human being in this great city who takes a personal interest in him. I call for a volunteer.”

With his desire to make a difference in just one child’s life, Ernest Coulter would pave the way for thousands of children. Indeed, he recognized a need in society, and he offered a solution.

110 years later, we, too, recognize that the need continues. And we, too, recognize that mentoring continues to play a pivotal role in the solution.

So when I began my tenure with Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC, I was thrilled at the opportunity to carry on such a legacy. I was hopeful that by continuing Coulter’s work, I can make an impact in the lives of children across our City. And, I was determined to lead the agency into its next century of service.

I was fortunate to have my parents there to guide and raise me as a child. They helped shape my dreams in life, and they provided me with the support and resources I needed to make them a reality. But the truth is, not every kid is so fortunate. In fact, in New York City alone, 1 in 3 children live in poverty. That translates to over half a million young people. 149,000 come from single-parent households. Because of their circumstances, many do not believe success is within reach.

We know that childhood and adolescence are trying enough even under ideal circumstances – but to many children, added challenges create obstacles that seem too difficult to overcome. That is where the value of mentoring lies: in showing these children what is possible and helping them to believe in themselves. We know from countless reports, studies and statistics that often, this is all it takes to help set a young person on the path to success.

So to all the volunteer Big Brothers and Big Sisters who have risen to the challenge and pledged to make a difference in the life of just one child, I thank you. Your impact is profound beyond words. And to all the mentors everywhere who give so freely of their time and attention to their own mentees, I thank you.

As the month of August comes to a close, let’s build on the momentum and keep the conversations going. We each have a responsibility to the next generation. Men and women. People of all races and creeds. Our educators and our business leaders. Our City, State and Federal Government. We all have a role to play and only by working together can we succeed.

Hector Batista is the Chief Executive Office of Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City. To become a volunteer mentor or to learn more about Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC, log onto www.bigsnyc.org or call 212-686-2042.