



# *Mercy Home's Friends First Mentoring Program*

## **Making a Lifetime of Difference**

Mercy Home believes that children whose lives have been marked by disappointment, limited opportunities and distressing circumstances in their neighborhoods and schools, benefit from positive and consistent involvement by adults.

In the more than 20 years since we established our Friends First volunteer mentoring program, we have matched more than 1,000 Chicago-area boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 17 with caring adults who have become reliable friends and role models.

There is no greater way to give back than by giving a little time to a child. Mercy Home's Friends First mentors share a few hours with a young person on weekends and explore the fun, friendship-building activities that abound in Chicago. Museums, parks and ball games are just some of the activities mentors can share with a child.

Just a few hours a month can make a lifetime of difference to a child. Our mentors' involvement and support will help a child build self-esteem and confidence and combat negative peer pressure. Volunteer mentors don't need to have all the answers. Our motto is: Just Be Yourself.

## Training and Support

Mercy Home's Friends First program provides all the professional staff services necessary to help foster the formation of significant and life-changing friendships. We carefully screen and provide training to adult volunteers who wish to mentor a child as well as offer ongoing support, supervision and encouragement.

Our support for volunteers and families goes above and beyond that provided in typical mentoring programs. We connect each family and volunteer mentor with a dedicated staff member who will provide ongoing advice and encouragement. We work together to select matches in which the mentor and youth share compatible interests. We provide matches with an activity update each month that describes fun things to do in and around Chicago. And, we will organize periodic group outings for our matches. If additional assistance and support is needed, we also provide access to a licensed psychologist 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Our staff is on a first-name basis with every mentor, child and parent/guardian in our program and considers all of our families and volunteers to be part of the Friends First community.

## Mentors, Play Your Part — Change the World

The work our motivated and dedicated volunteers do extends Mercy Home's mission to change kids' lives

beyond its walls and out into the community. Mentors in our Friends First program come from all age groups and all walks of life but are united by their concern for at-risk youth in Chicago. By sharing their gifts with young people in their own or nearby neighborhoods, mentors help build stronger communities one child at a time. A study conducted by Public/Private Ventures shows that children in mentoring programs similar to Friends First are less likely to start using drugs or alcohol and less likely to skip school. They are also more likely than their peers to develop a more trusting and supportive relationship with their parents.

And, anyone who impacts a child's life can't help but be changed themselves; by expanding a young person's horizons, our mentors often find their own world view broadened as well! You can read stories and insights from real volunteer mentors and learn more about Mercy Home's Friends First mentoring program by visiting our web site at [mercyhome.org/mentor](http://mercyhome.org/mentor).

## Make a Difference for a Child

If you are interested in volunteering or know a child who may be positively impacted by having a mentor, call 312-738-7552 or visit [mercyhome.org/mentor](http://mercyhome.org/mentor).

Mercy Home's Friends First mentoring program is fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families and is recognized for achieving the highest standards of excellence in its care.



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For more information visit  
us at [www.mercyhome.org](http://www.mercyhome.org)

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