

Mars-Bros is a program of
Oakdale Neighbors

Mars-Bros Partners are
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*"So if anyone is in
Christ there is a new
creation, everything
old has passed away;
see, everything has
become new!"
-II Corinthians 5: 17
(NRSV)*



investing deeply in relationships

Mentor Profile

by peter dainling

Sometimes Shawn Bailey just needs someone to talk to.

Other times Shawn needs someone who can challenge him on the basketball court.

Shawn's Mars-Bros mentor, Rick DeVries, fills both those roles.

"He can't quite move me out of the lane," Rick said of their on-court encounters.

"I just have to use my speed," Shawn replies with a smile.

Since meeting for the first time last fall, Rick and Shawn's relationship has grown into much more than trips to the basketball court or bowling alley.

Rick said he and Shawn are slowly building trust. They ask each other a lot of questions about life and Shawn said he now enjoys opening up to Rick.

His mother, Gwendolyn Bailey, said Shawn's father isn't in the picture and having Rick around gives the eighth-grader a positive male role model.

Shawn also needed someone steady. "He was dealing with a lot of stressors last year including grades at school and trouble with some of his teachers," Gwendolyn said.

"Rick came into his life at a time when it was crucial for somebody to step in," she said. "I



Rick DeVries has been mentoring Shawn Bailey since January 2008

really believe we wouldn't have made it through the school year if it wasn't for Rick, because now Shawn has somebody else to talk to."

When Shawn comes home after meeting Rick at a cafe or a bookstore, Gwendolyn sometimes asks what they discussed.

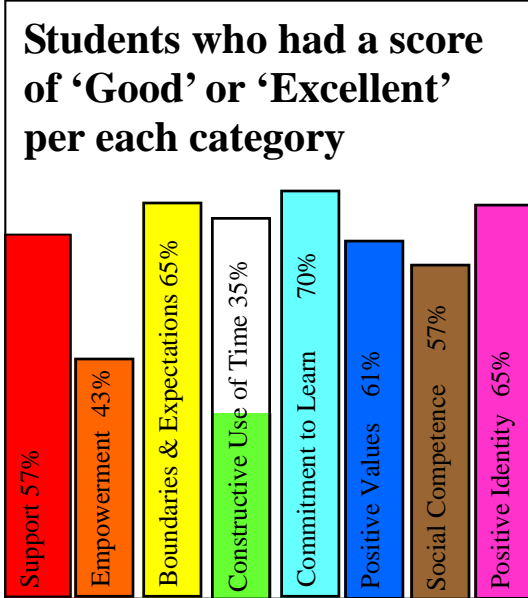
"Man stuff," Shawn tells her. "And I have to accept that, because that's their privacy," Gwendolyn said.

Rick and Shawn have a lot in common. They're both tall and quiet, and they both love sports and reading.

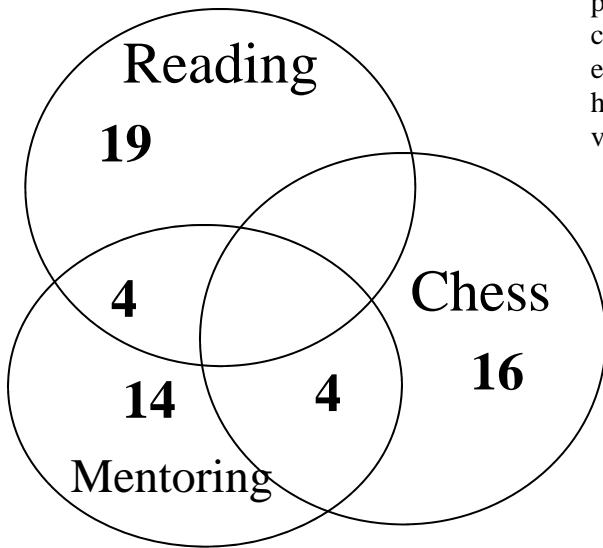
Sometimes when they go to a bookstore or library, Rick said Shawn gets lost in the aisles.

Results from our Asset Surveys

by bruce boman



This table indicates the percentage of students who took the survey and scored above 21 in each area. Scores range from 1-30. poor 1-8, fair 9-20, good 21-25, and excellent 26-30



This table indicates participation of our students in Chess, Reading, and Mentoring. The numbers, where the circle overlaps indicated youth who participate in more than one activity. Students from Incentive Accounts are not shown here (3).

“Though the fig tree does not blossom and no fruit is on the vines though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food though the flock is cut off from the field and there is no herd in the stalls yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will exult in the God of my salvation.” Habakkuk 3:17ff (NRSV)

Floods devastated the Midwest, hurricanes destroyed the South, Michigan is in a recession with an unemployment rate of 8.9%, and closer to home, in the Oakdale Neighborhood, an innocent teenager tragically lost his life to gun violence.

Recently, I used the Search Institutes “Developmental Asset Profiles” or DAP to provide empirical evidence to determine the effectiveness of mentoring on our youth. 25 of 49 youth returned surveys and were scored according to eight asset categories.

I have long wrestled with the results from the surveys, which indicated low scores in “Empowerment.” It needs to be mentioned that Empowerment is closely linked to the context-stability of our students. For example, “Is my school, community, home: safe.” If a neighborhood is victim to these things then Empow-

erment goes way down. Grand Rapids Police Department reported 220 crimes in a 2 mile radius of the Oakdale Neighborhood this summer. Personal interviews with students indicate that they are learning in schools but they don’t feel safe from peers or the community. Bottom line, our middle school students are saying they don’t have the resources other communities have to be empowered.

On a positive note, it looks like students overall scored high in “Boundaries and Expectations,” “Positive Identity,” and “Commitment to Learn.” “Scores in the excellent range for Boundaries and Expectations scale suggests

reporting of consistent clear rules and consequences...(from) positive role models among friends, family and outside the family.” (DAP manual) This category and “Positive Identity” were good indicators of our success with programming. Our volunteers assisted parents by reinforcing boundaries, which leads to positive outcomes. In addition, our programs that include reading and chess encouraged students to build skills, which lead to higher self-esteem.

We will trust in the Lord that these results show us moving in the right direction.

“...yet I will rejoice in the Lord.”



Darnell Anderson above right and four other TKO members played in a US Chess Federation tournament in May 2008.

Pray for us

Monday

Our mentee

Pray for the youth as they write new goals, adjust to school, and develop new skills.

Tuesday

Our mentors

Please pray for new mentors to join our program.

Wednesday

The program

Praise for Chess. There are many supportive people around the chess program. Many opportunities bring tough decisions.

Thursday

Our community

Pray for the Witherspoon family, who lost a son to violence in our community. David and Danielle were students at SEAC where I was a classroom assistant for three years.

Friday

Fundraising

Pray that Mars-Bros can trust God to provide for our financial needs this year.

Thanks for your financial support

Individuals

Dan and Meghan Aupperlee
Robert and Elizabeth Aupperlee
Donald and Sherrill Barr
Martin Barr
Gerald Bell
Edward and Joan Berrends
Eric and Sammy Beuker
Ronald and Karen Bowen
Jonathan and Grace Bradford
Rebecca Brasser
Lance Brewer
Anita and Tyler Buitenwerf
Shawn and Mary Bultsma
Mark and Susan Burgers
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Kevin Lawrence
Senita Lenear
Letitia Levi
David and Kelly Malone
Jessie and Earnestine Mays
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Sara and Brett Nelson

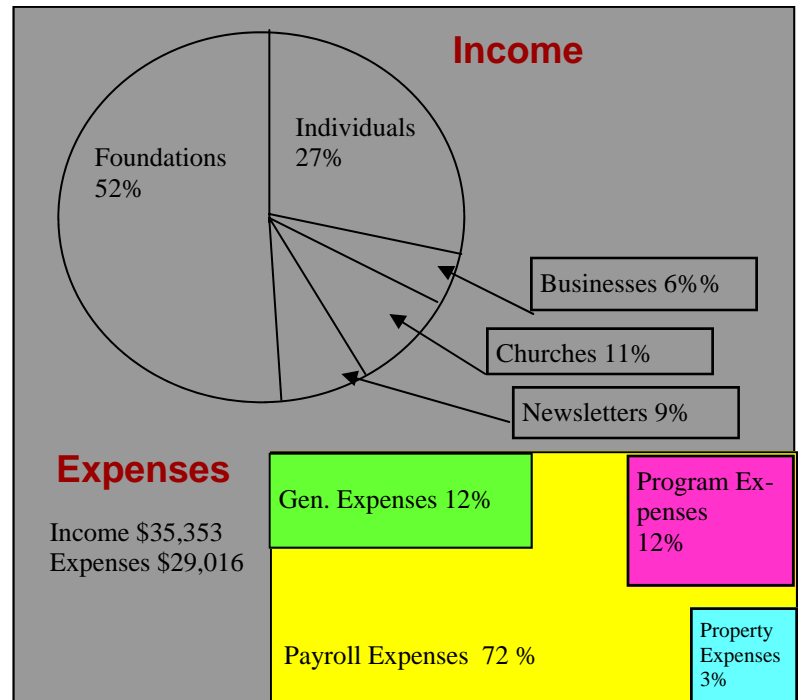
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James and Victoria Steenbergen
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Tim and Sharron VanderKodde
Marilyn Vander Meer
Susan VanderMeulen
Brad and Ruth Vanbeek
Robert and Joan VanderHaak
Nathan and Charity Visser
Matthew and Laura Watrous
Melinda and Matthew Weiss
LJ and Catherine Witte

Businesses

Apex Outdoor Gear
Art of the Table
Berends Hendricks & Stuit
Carrabba's Italian Grill
Cascade Culver's
Celebration Cinemas
Community Auto Repair
D&W Food Center
Detroit Pistons
FedEx Kinko's
Forest Hills Foods
Gazelle Sports
Global Infusion
Heaven Scent Cake Design
Huntington Bank
L&L Painting Inc.
The Master Technician
Marie Catrife's
Meijer
M.C. Sports
Modern Hardware
Omelet Shoppe & Bakery
Ogle and Veldkamp Realty
Schuler's Books and Music
Tech Soup
Trillium Farms
Strider's
Urban Mill Café
VanAndle Arena
West Michigan White Caps



Gwen Bailey and her sons watched the Pistons game in January.



Foundations and Churches

Classis East Home Mission
Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation
Grand Rapids Community Foundation
Greg Jennings Foundation
Oakdale Park Church CRC
Bob and Cheri Vander Weide Foundation

Collaborations

Calvin College
Camp Tall Turf
Grand Rapids Public Library (Madison)
Grand Rapids Public Schools
Kent County Mentoring Collaborative
Madison Square CRC
Mentor1
Neland Ave. CRC
Navigators
Oakdale Neighbors
Oakdale Park CRC
Other Way Ministries
Wedgwood Christian Services

Join us to say **“Thank you”**
and show appreciation to our
students **December 2nd, 2008**

Mongolian BBQ on 28th street will be hosting a dinner to raise awareness and financial support for Mars-Bros.

Please reserve this date. Tickets can be purchased by calling Bruce Boman at 616 248-2848

Continued from pg 1 "He gets so engrossed in those comic books," Rick said.

Mars-Bros Director Bruce Boman said the two are a good match because Shawn is willing to work on the relationship, and Rick, who has five sons of his own, is an experienced parent.

Until meeting Rick, Bruce said he thought the best mentors were between 25-35 years old -- young enough to relate with teenagers and old enough to be reliable.

Rick changed his mind. At age 53, Rick is both reliable and reliable, Bruce said, and needs a lot less guidance than many mentors.

"Rick is more willing to make things long-term, because he realizes it takes time," Bruce said. "I think that comes from being a parent."

Gwendolyn said she knew everything would be fine

once she found out Rick could keep up with Shawn on the basketball court.

"At first I was a little concerned, but after a while he proved he can hang with Shawn," she said.

On top of her parenting duties, Gwendolyn works full-time and is taking classes toward a master's degree.

Even with a busy schedule, she took on a dual role at Mars-Bros by mentoring a 14-year-old girl herself.

"It's an awesome experience that I thank God for, because I didn't really know what I was getting to," she said. "I get to be a friend to another young lady pressing her way through her situation."

Just like with her own mentoring relationship, Gwendolyn knows Rick will be there when Shawn needs a listening ear or some stern advice.

"As long as Shawn keeps reaching out to Rick, Rick will be there for Shawn," she said.



Left to right: Matt Poole, Jeremy DeRoo, and Gerald Smith. These three men improved the chess skills of 12 youth who were a part of TKO (The Knight Operation).

Thanks for Volunteering Chess club

Bill Adams
Jeremy Deroo
Katy Ford
Marionte` Jackson
Matt Poole
Gerald Smith
Mack Smith Sr.

Lisa Tillman
R.J. Tillman

Incentive Accounts

Letitia Levi

Mentors

Anna Augustine
Dan Aupperlee

Gwen Bailey
Matt Cinco
Rick DeVries
Kris Koster
Luke Moore
Jordan Sipperley
Dustin VanDuine

Newsletter

Joel Lautenbach
Peter Daining
Ryan Struck-VanderHaak
Matt Watrous

Read-it book club

Oakdale Neighbors
Mars-Bros
1260 Kalamazoo SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Deb VanDuinen
Shocka Williams
Bruce Wyrick

Support

Meghan Aupperlee
Marty Barr
Mark Burgers
Susan Burgers
Betty Diemer
Brian Hamilton
Rachel Hamilton
Theresa Maze
Edith Reed
Steve Volkers
Amy Volkers

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bruce@marsbros.org
www.marsbros.org

IMPORTANT: Mars-Bros is a program of Oakdale Neighbors, but all donations are separate. **Please make checks payable to "Oakdale Neighbors" and the memo should read 'Mars-Bros'**