



## A national call for 100,000 adult mentors

By JULIE KNIPE  
knipej@phillynews.com

When April Wright joined the Achieving Independence Center, she was shy, having some problems with her family, not doing well in school and not sure what she wanted to do when she graduated from Strawberry Mansion High School.

Five months later, she is taking her SATs, applying to college, tutoring kindergarteners and on the honor roll.

April, who has lived in foster care and now lives with her grandparents, credits her progress on AIC's mentoring program, which paired her with her mentor, Brooke Wollenberg, an administrator with the University of Pennsylvania Hospital.

"It was great because I really didn't have anybody to talk to at home," said April, 17.

Wollenberg, 31, first met April in July. They talk to each other at least once a week and often have lunch or breakfast.

They talk about everything from schoolwork to personal problems.

"The reward for me is seeing that April is really succeeding," said Wollenberg.

April intends to study acting or cosmetology, although she hasn't ruled out business or pediatrics.

"Research is very clear that young people who share a purposeful relationship with an adult outside their families are much more likely to regularly attend school and complete their education," said Alba Martinez, chief executive of the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

This month, the United Way kicks off "National Mentoring Month," an effort to recruit, train, place and support 100,000 new adult mentors for young people.

AIC, a member of United Way's campaign for mentors' network, is a program to help support kids who have been in the city's foster care system.

A project of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services and the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corp., the AIC helps provide education, job training, employment, housing, mentoring and life-skills learning for those aged 16 to 24.

Wollenberg joined last summer, thinking she would volunteer to teach. She ended up committing herself to a year of mentoring.

"Once we started doing things, the time just flew by," said Wollenberg. "It's been fun."

Tonight, Comcast-Spectacor is sponsoring a night at the 76ers for the United Way mentors. Some 75 mentors and their coaches will join District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson and others to kick off the campaign. For more info about United Way's Campaign for Mentors call 215-665- 2451.

