

THE RIVERTOWNS Enterprise

The Hometown Newspaper
of Hastings-on-Hudson,
Dobbs Ferry, Ardsley
and Irvington

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 19 • JULY 29, 2016

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION

CV volunteer starts mentoring program

By Patricia Robert

“These kids need to know that they can have some control in their lives, that they can design their own lives,” said Paul Muratore, a 31-year volunteer at The Children’s Village, the residential treatment center in Dobbs Ferry. To meet these needs, Muratore founded a new CV-based volunteer program, Connections.

The program, which was launched this past April, is designed to help the teen residents transition from CV back into the real world through the one-on-one interaction of a mentor and mentee. Muratore believes this relationship help the youth have more successful lives.

“I had been very successful in my professional life and I felt a desire to give back,” Muratore said about his early motivation to volunteer. “I was immediately struck by the challenges and the opportunities CV provided during my first visit back in 1985. I have been helping out there in a variety of ways ever since. Now that I am retired, I can devote substantially more time and will do so through Connections.” In addition to being the program’s founder, Muratore serves as executive director.

Until his retirement in 2015, Muratore was president and CEO of Talent Partners, a New York City-headquartered support service for agency and advertiser clients. He will continue in his post as chairman of the SAG/AFTRA Pension and Health Plan. Muratore, 56, and his wife, Joi, are residents of Briarcliff Manor. They have two daughters, Lindsay, 22, a graduate of the University of Vermont who now lives in Seattle, and Haley, 20, a junior at Elon University in North Carolina.

According to its website, Connections’ mission is to work with families to help society’s most vulnerable children so they can become educationally proficient, economically productive, and socially responsible. A unique feature of the program is that it provides one-on-one long-term mentoring to boys ages 15-25 in residential treatment centers and other foster care situations.



Paul Muratore, founder and executive director of the Connections program at The Children’s Village.

Mentors are expected to spend approximately 10 hours per month with their mentees, for at least one year.

“The mentor-youth relationship will start while the youth is still on campus, at least for several months before they transition. The important thing will be keeping the consistency,” said Amy DelliPaoli, CV’s director of volunteers. “There is no time limit on how long the relationship can last. That will be up to the mentor and the mentee. It’s possible that they could stay connected for a lifetime.”

The response to the program has been good, according to DelliPaoli. The initial goal was to recruit 20 volunteers and there are already 13 mentors signed up, vetted, and ready to be matched. While the pairing of the mentors and mentees will be on a rolling

basis, it is expected that the first match will be in place by the end of next month. For now Connections will be a “pilot” program at CV, with possible implementation at other residential facilities.

“Paul has really been pounding the pavement, recruiting professionals like himself,” DelliPaoli said.

She points out that CV has strict guidelines for mentors and looks at a lot of factors before accepting someone into the program. “And,” DelliPaoli added, “sometimes the kids have a tendency to push away the very people who are helping them because they have been so damaged in the past and the mentor will have to be prepared for that.”

“These youth face so many challenges, and often come from a really dangerous environment,” Muratore said. “It is crucial to

give them the support and tools they need to overcome these obstacles, and to be in every way a role model.”

Based on his experiences as a mentor at CV, Muratore knows the first step is to develop a trusting relationship. This can take time, he has found, as it may take the youth a while to trust someone enough to stop wondering “why are you doing this for me?”

“The mentor may well be the first person ever in the youth’s life to actually care about him, and this can take some getting used to,” Muratore stressed.

The mentors participating in Connections will focus on identifying, connecting, and monitoring resources that will help in the youth’s development in such areas as education, health, mental and emotional wellness, career planning and work experience, housing, and independent living skills. The mentor may help with such practical needs as navigating the college application process and finding financial aid, helping the mentee to enter the military or police force, or finding a vocational training program that matches their skill set.

“We will be seeking financial support,” Muratore said, “but for now that could be for things like access to computers, the money needed for a job applications, or transportation to an interview.”

Muratore often refers to conversations he has had with youth he has mentored. In response to the simplest of questions, the youth will begin to reveal his interests, share where he would like to see himself, what he would like to be, if given the chance. These conversations can lead to the youth asking, “Do you think that I can?” and Muratore, as mentor, replying, “Yes, I think so.”

New and engrossing project though it may be, Connections does not mean that Muratore will stop what he has been doing these past 31 years. “I won’t give up my passion. I still have kids on campus that I am mentoring and that will continue,” he said.

For more on The Children’s Village and Connections, visit childrensvillage.org/connections.