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The ATC Tutors & Wright to Read Mentors (WtoR) Program is a collaboration of the Alexandria Tutoring Consortium, Gwen Mullen, Executive Director; Claudia Barnett, Program Manager, and Wright to Read, Leigh Hoyer, Executive Director (www.campaigncenter.org).

Dear ATC Tutors,

We are all aware that tutoring and mentoring are both extremely valuable protective factors that often decrease the threat of young people getting involved in negative behaviors, including poor school performance. Last spring, ATC organized a "pilot project" that included three ATC tutors interested in continuing reading and interacting with their tutees over the summer. Mike Mackey, who proposed adding a mentoring opportunity to ATC's program and was part of the pilot, had this to say about his experience.

"During the course of my time reading with my student - "Tommy" - through ATC at Jefferson Houston last year, I felt a strong desire to help to continue to develop his reading skills and our relationship beyond the normal course of the ATC year. On various occasions during our ATC reading sessions, we would talk about people or places or things in the books. For example, we read one book that included a story about the local fire station. Tommy had never been to a station, I discovered. However, through the ATC/WtoR Pilot Program, Tommy and I made the story come to life. One afternoon, we visited with Ms. Patsieann and Firefighter Chris at the Old Town Fire Station. Tommy was in awe and very much enjoyed the day, even trying on Firefighter Chris' hat. Months later, when we were reading on a bench, a fire truck whizzed down the road. Tommy said to me, "I wonder if that's Firefighter Chris?!" Talk about a child developing trust and a feeling of community.

The Pilot Program continued for us throughout the summer. It was not difficult for me to fit it into my schedule - it worked just like ATC. Tommy and I went to the park and passed the ball and read, passed the ball and read, and passed the ball. He liked me to watch him run and told me lots of stories. I'd quiz him and watched him continue to learn.

We later went trick-or-treating and even went out for pizza on his birthday. One afternoon, Tommy and I sat at a bookstore and he read aloud as passers-by looked at him - he kept reading aloud (and this is a boy who, a year before, had trouble writing his name).

I still say, to this day, that my connection with Tommy is one of the most important things that has ever happened to me. It has not required a lot of extra time but there has been a

LOT of joy. I must add that Tommy's behavior over the course of the year has been very good and his teacher told me the other day, "I don't worry about Tommy's academics", adding that he is in the top reading level in his class. Join me in continuing the great job you've already started. “

ATC Tutors & WtoR Mentors is offering this opportunity to interested current ATC tutors who have bonded with their student and who think their student would benefit from continuing to engage in reading activities and other enriching experiences over the summer and, perhaps, beyond. Training in mentoring, a background screening and a support structure for your mentoring experience will be provided by Leigh Hoyer at Wright to Read. As before, you will continue your in-school tutoring during the school year through ATC and receive support for that through ATC's program manager Claudia Barnett and each school's volunteer coordinator. This division of responsibilities allows ATC to continue focusing on ensuring that all ACPS children can read at or above grade level by the end of second grade.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Leigh at lhoyer@campagnacenter.org or call 703-549-0111 x101. She will schedule a background screening & training session in May. The background screening process, to meet with your student outside of the school, includes an FBI criminal background check, a Central Registry Search for Child Protective Services, and a DMV record search. This process takes 2-4 weeks and we want for it to be completed before the end of the school year (late June). At the training, you will receive a binder including sample reading lessons to use during the summer as well as mentoring resources.

If you have questions, please e-mail atc@opmh.org or call 703-549-6670 ext. 119. As always, thanks for all you are doing to help ensure all first and second graders have an equal opportunity to learn to read.

Gwen and Claudia