

Mill City Mentors goes virtual

LOWELL

By Aaron curtis

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LOWELL » The goal of Mill City Mentors is to provide support to area youth facing adversity by connecting them with a volunteer mentor to confide in and spend time with.

Mill City Mentors endured a major obstacle last year when the coronavirus pandemic struck, eliminating the program's ability to have mentors meet face- to- face with mentees.

The program — part of Greater Lowell nonprofit Community Teamwork Inc. — was able to adapt.

With the nation in lockdown, Mill City Mentors switched to virtual mentoring, or eMentoring, in April 2020, according to Program Director Ed Banks. The new method of mentoring turned out to be a success and has introduced a new dynamic to the realm of mentoring.

Tewksbury residents Bruce Gorman and his wife, MJ Gorman, said life was already difficult for 9- year- old Luke Gorman before the pandemic took hold. Luke is Bruce's son from a previous marriage. Bruce had previously shared joint custody of Luke with his ex-wife. Now, Luke was living fulltime with him and his wife.

“A (Department of Children and Families) caseworker suggested after talking to Luke that it would be nice for him to have a mentor, a big brother, or someone who he could talk to who wasn't a parent,” Bruce Gorman said.

“A neutral ground person,” MJ Gorman added.

The mentorship was set up at the beginning of the pandemic, with Banks serving as Luke's “eMentor.” It worked out well, as Banks and Luke quickly developed a strong relationship, built mostly around a joint love for video games.

“ Early on in the pandemic, no one really knew what was happening, so it was good for him to get

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some sort of socialization with someone outside of our family,” MJ Gorman said.

Charles Calenda is one of the Mill City Mentors volunteers, serving as a mentor to a 10- year- old for the past year.

“(The program) looked like a great way to get involved and kinda help build a brighter and more prosperous future for the kids,” said Calenda, a 25year- old medical student who grew up in Chelmsford.

“ It was a very exciting and inspiring moment for me to be able to meet someone I'd be able to have an impact on,” he said.



Calenda acknowledges he was hesitant about meeting his mentee for the first time over Zoom, but the two quickly clicked.

“A lot of the mentorships would have diminished without this option,” Calenda said about the eMentorship program.

For anyone interested in mentoring an area youth or for those looking for a mentor for their family, apply at commteam.org/millcitymentors.

Follow Aaron Curtis on Twitter @ aselahcurtis

mill city mentors program director ed banks delivers a bike donated by Kevin Kuhs to a mentee.

courtesy of community teamWorK inc.



luke Gorman, 9, of tewksbury, is seen on a screen during one of his ementoring sessions through the mill city mentors program, which is part of community teamwork inc.

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