

Ellen's "Mentor of the Year" Nomination!

Nominator: Darleen Coleman

Ellen has been mentoring for the past 8 years. When the first two little boys that she mentored when on to middle school, Ellen asked to be matched with two little girls for a change. But, once again, the school matched her with two boys. She's been mentoring them ever since. When one of the boys transferred to another school at the beginning of this school year, Ellen decided to continue mentoring him even though she now has to go to two different schools.

Ellen is what I'd call a natural when it comes to mentoring. She instinctively knows what to do and has become a resource for other new volunteer mentors. In fact, our program's Mentor Starter Kits evolved from Ellen's idea of carrying a tote bag filled with crayons, cards, and puzzles with her to her mentoring sessions.

The counselor of one of Ellen's mentees said, "This student has great social and emotional challenges. He needs all of the support and positive reinforcement we can give him. He eagerly looked forward to his time with Mrs. P and wore his lucky shirt every Wednesday just for her."

Ellen has a way of incorporating learning into games and other activities. In a 2009 article in Prime Magazine, she was quoted by saying, "anyone walking past one of my mentoring sessions might assume that we are merely playing a game. However, that game might include using math to keep score or reasoning skills in a strategy game. While we 'play,' we talk about a variety of things. I encourage them any way that I can. Sometimes it will be classroom behavior, good manners, the importance of a good education, or even just getting to school on time. I never thought I would be shooting baskets in the gym at my age, but some days we do some of that. The smile on the faces of my mentees is so very rewarding and I think they enjoy our time together as much as I do."