



CAMP MAAS

TEEN PROGRAMS

FAMILY CAMPS

Tamarack Camps' Board of Directors invites you to the
2014 ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, August 3, 2014
11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Camp Maas – The New "Old" Amp
 4361 Perryville Road, Ortonville, Michigan

INSTALLATION OF THE NEW BOARD

Jeffrey Sternberg
 President's Award Recipient

Casual attire / Brunch will be provided (Dietary laws observed)
 Please understand that we are unable to accommodate camper visits.
 For additional information: (248) 627-2821, www.tamarackcamps.com



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Profound Impact

Mentors make a difference in the lives of young people.

Dan Trudeau
 Special to the Jewish News

A lot has changed since Jerry Weinfuss and Daniel Whetstine first met six years ago. Jerry vividly recalls the challenge of getting to know the taciturn 13-year-old who was matched up as his mentee.

"When we met, he wasn't getting along with his parents. He wasn't doing well in school," said Jerry, an insurance salesman who lives in Farmington Hills and attends services at Temple Israel. "It was kind of interesting as we tried to get to know each other for the first six months or so. It took me that long to get more than a yes or no answer from him."

Jerry and Daniel were introduced through Mentor Connection, a program of Jewish Family Service that pairs caring adult volunteers with young people, ages 7 to 17, from around Oakland County. The program asks volunteer mentors to meet for social outings with their mentees at least twice a month for one year and to participate in organized group events.

The nature of the relationship between mentor and mentee is often simple: just spend time together. But the impact can be profound. In Daniel's case, Jerry has been a steady presence as he's navigated the process of growing up.

"When I got to know him, I realized we have a lot of things in common," Daniel said. "I have a lot of people in my life, but there's not many people I could tell everything to, and he was one of them."

Middle school and high school were challenging times for Daniel. He had to cope with his parents' divorce, find an approach to academics that worked for him and learn to make positive decisions when confronted with difficult situations.

Throughout that time, Jerry was there as a friend and impartial sounding board. He was impressed with Daniel's creativity, his interest in art and his talent for music. Jerry said he saw tremendous potential for Daniel's future, even when his mentee encountered struggles and setbacks.

"Over time, he developed a trust in me. He started to realize I was there to be a friend, not his parent," Jerry said. "It got to the point where I started hav-



Daniel Whetstine and his mentor Jerry Weinfuss

ing real conversations with him. We talked about what was important to him and what was important to me."

Daniel aged out of the Mentor Connection program last year, and he recently moved to the Kalamazoo area with his mother, but his relationship with Jerry didn't end. They've continued to speak about once a week.

Daniel recently graduated from high school, after Jerry encouraged him to enroll in online classes when conventional approaches weren't a good fit. He also got his first job and is learning how to drive. He plans to enroll in community college soon and one day wants to be an English teacher.

"[Jerry] has really helped by being a good influence in my life. He's inspired me to move forward and just keep doing what I'm doing," Daniel said.

For Jerry, the experience of watching Daniel progress and grow over the course of six years has been its own reward. It's required a significant commitment of his time and energy, but it's an investment he is glad he's made.

"For the first couple years it was a real struggle for me to see if I was having any impact. But I've watched him grow tremendously," said Jerry. "His mother keeps telling me that he would have been lost without my involvement. That's made me feel really good." □

To learn more about becoming a mentor, or about finding a mentor for your child, visit www.jfsdetroit.org/volunteers/mentor-connection, or contact Emily Croitori at (248) 592-2317.

Dan Trudeau is the communications manager at Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit.