

## **KIDS HOPE @ Christ Church Cathedral**

Christ Church Cathedral has partnered with KIDS HOPE USA, a national faith-based mentoring program, to provide one-on-one mentoring and caring relationships for elementary and middle school at-risk students attending public school. Most of the students in the mentoring program come from families hit hard by economic distress. These children often lack basic social and emotional support, eroding their hope for the future, sometimes even rendering them physiologically incapable of learning. Kids Hope strives to provide for these needs by providing a caring adult mentor for a child at a critical time in their lives when values are formed, self-esteem is developed, and basic academic and problem-solving skills are acquired.

**A Kids Hope mentor is a special friend who affirms their mentee's worth by simply showing up every week to provide individualized one-on-one attention and friendship which may just be the "extraordinary effort" that child needs.**

**Being a mentor provides a chance to make a real difference**

- **in the life of an at-risk child**
- **in the life of the mentor, who witness real transformation in the children they help**
- **for a school, whose burdens are lightened through the work KIDS HOPE does**
- **for entire communities, whose connections are strengthened, whose futures are brighter, and whose children are better equipped to succeed in their own lives and lift up those around them, because someone believed in them and helped them believe in themselves**

Kids Hope @ Christ Church Cathedral mentors are volunteers from the Cathedral congregation. Mentors are interviewed and trained by the Cathedral Kids Hope director, Jennifer Sickman. Mentors are vetted through the Houston Independent School District volunteer program, and also through The Episcopal Diocese of Texas Safeguarding God's Children Training. Mentors pledge to avoid any suggestion of proselytizing, lest by law the program be disallowed in public schools, and make a commitment to mentor for a school year.

Kids Hope @ Christ Church Cathedral builds partnerships with the Kids Hope program school. The school provides physical space for mentoring and communication support with the children and their parents. Children are recommended for the program by their teachers or school administrators. Teachers provide Kids Hope with a basic assessment of the student and facilitate the documented parental permission required for the child to join the program. The Cathedral Kids Hope director works with the student's teachers to find the best student-mentor match for the school year.

**Mentors** meet with their assigned mentee throughout the school year, **one hour each week** at the school during school hours. Although mentors commit for a period of one school year, many mentors choose to return and continue the relationship with her or his child mentee for multiple years. The child's teacher(s) and mentor coordinate the day and time for the weekly mentoring sessions. If on occasion the mentor is unable to keep to the usual scheduled visit, he or she can reschedule a visit or make arrangements for a substitute mentor. In the case of extended

absences, the mentor must inform the program director and her or his student in advance of the dates, if known, so the child will know when to expect the mentor to return. Through this demonstration of faithfulness and caring the child learns to trust.

Each mentor-mentee relationship has an assigned volunteer **Prayer Partner** who prays mentor, the student and their relationship. A prayer partner provides invaluable support to the mentor. The prayer partner and mentor stay in contact on a regular basis so the prayer partner is aware of specific prayer needs and is apprised of the successes of the mentor-mentee relationship and the emotional and academic progress of the student. A mentor carries the love of God personally to the child through the relationship and a prayer partner does behind-the-scenes work of praying for the needs of the mentor and child.

If you would like to make a difference, please contact Jennifer Lin Sickman at [KidsHope@ChristChurchCathedral.org](mailto:KidsHope@ChristChurchCathedral.org) or call 713.222.2593 to volunteer.