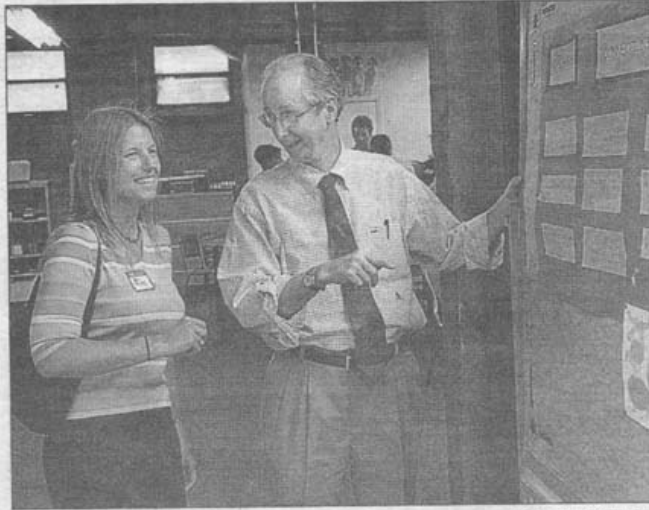


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KEITH HALE/SUN-TIMES

Dan Bassill, president of Cabrini Connections, an after-school center, chats with Jennifer Pines at a mixer for new and returning volunteers.

Calling all volunteers: Tutors for kids needed

Citywide recruiting drive begins today, runs until Saturday

By KATE N. GROSSMAN
STAFF REPORTER

Each time she opened her e-mail account, Jennifer Pines found another round of responses from fellow Notre Dame alumni.

Everyone, it seemed, wanted to help her teach poor kids to design Web sites, to use computers and surf the Internet.

"There are so many people who want to do something, but they don't know where to start," said Pines, who sought help launching a technology club at Cabrini Connections, an after-school center for kids in and near the Cabrini-Green housing development.

Potential volunteers will get that opening during a major recruitment campaign today through Saturday. At 36 sites across the Chicago area, adult mentors can sign up to work at one of 300 tutoring and mentoring programs.

"These adults have all kinds of power and resources they can share with these kids," said Dan Bassill, president of Cabrini Connections and a founder of the Tutor/Mentor Connection, which organized nine years ago to recruit volunteers and foster networking between agencies.

The sites include Barbara's Bookstore at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, 10 MB Financial Bank locations and the Hyde Park Shopping Center.

Pines got involved because she wanted a break from her job as a technology consultant at Arthur Andersen. She chose Cabrini Connections because they encouraged her to use her computer background to start the technology club. After a rocky first few weeks, the kids took off.

"It was just really inspiring for me to see motivated kids that really didn't have much but were willing to dig down and work toward their goals," Pines said.

A main goal of the Tutor/Mentor Connection is to help tutoring programs tap into resources and improve. Not all programs work well, Bassill said. But when they do, something magical can happen.

"These people stayed in my corner no matter how much I pushed them away," said Tytannie Harris, a 21-year-old former ward of the state who has had three mentors over the years and is now working as a teaching assistant and going to college full-time to become a teacher. "They've just cared about me and given me advice. They've been like guardian angels."

A list of recruitment sites is available online at www.tutormentorexchange.net or by calling (312) 492-9614.