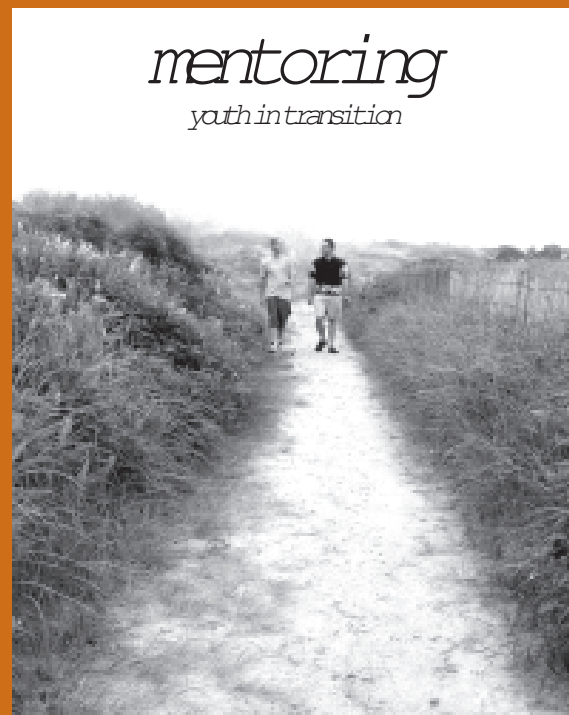




"A Mentor is..."
written by Missy B.,
a youth in foster care
mentored since 1999



COMMUNITY MENTORING
Miskie School of Public Service
PO Box 9300, 29 Baxter Boulevard
Portland, Maine 04104-9300
phone: (207) 780-5860
<http://www.communitymentoring.org>

GUIDEBOOK

Authors
Joan Morse
Nancy Markowitz
Nancy Connolly
Rebecca Wertheimer
Ahmen Belanger

Fall 2004



The University of Southern Maine

The University of Southern Maine, with a rich history reaching back to 1878, is a comprehensive metropolitan university offering associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees within the University of Maine System. The University of Southern Maine's fundamental mission is teaching, research, and public service for the benefit of the citizens of Maine and society in general. In achieving its mission and fulfilling its responsibilities as a university, the University of Southern Maine addresses the aspirations and needs of southern Maine and serves as a vehicle for linking southern Maine and the state to the nation and the world. The University actively encourages faculty, staff, and students to contribute to and participate in state, national, and international academic and professional communities.

The Muskie School of Public Service

The Muskie School of Public Service educates leaders, informs public policy, and strengthens civic life through its graduate degree programs, research institutes and public outreach activities. By making the essential connection between research, practice, and informed public policy, the School is dedicated to improving the lives of people of all ages, in every county in Maine and every state in the nation.

About the Institute for Public Sector Innovation

The Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI) has a vision of competent and caring people in high performance organizations creatively working together to promote the public good. The mission is to promote individual and organizational effectiveness and responsiveness in a climate of change. The Institute achieves its mission by building partnerships in which we facilitate organizational change, promote the use of new technologies for greater efficiency, bridge the gap between theory and practice, promote a holistic, competency-based approach, and pioneer state-of-the-art training, human resource management and organizational development. The Institute models and fosters a set of common values or unifying themes in its work.

The Youth Development Unit

The Youth Development Unit partners with youth, communities, organizations, universities and policy makers at the local, state and national level to enhance their capacity to create services, opportunities, policies and supports for children and youth.



In complying with the letter and spirit of applicable laws and in pursuing its core goals of pluralism, the University of Southern Maine does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin or citizenship status, age, disability, or veteran's status in employment, education, and all other areas of the university. The University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request.

Discrimination inquiries can be directed to Kathleen Roberts, (207) 780-5094, TTY (207) 780-5646, or to the Office of Civil Rights (617) 223-5692.

Mentor Resources

Bayer, Marty, *Overcoming Obstacles to Independence*.

Jekielek, Susan M. M.A.; Moore, Kristen A., PhD; Hair, Elizabeth C., PhD.; Scanpa, Harriet J. (2002, February). Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development. *Child Trends Research Brief*.

Sieg, Kevin. (1998, October 26). My Turn-Growing up a Foster Kid: I've Survived the System and begun my college education. Some of us aren't so lucky. *Newsweek*.

Website:

Foster Club, the club for foster kids. <http://fosterclub.com>

National Mentoring Partnership, <http://mentoring.org>

Community Mentoring Program. www.communitymentoring.org

Additional Reading

Book:

Desetta, Al (ed.). (1996). *The Heart Knows Something Different: Teenage Voices from the Foster Care System*. New York: Per Sea Books, Inc.

Mallon, G. (2003). *In the System and in the Life: A Guide for Teens and Staff to the Gay Experience in Foster Care*.

Youth Leadership Advisory Team, (YLAT). (Third Edition, Winter 2004) *Answers... A Handbook for Youth by Youth in Foster Care*. Maine: Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine and the Maine Department of Human Services.



GUIDEBOOK

mentoring youth in transition

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
About Youth in Foster Care—Myth and Fact	2
The William Bridges' Transition Framework	4-5
Promoting Positive Attachment	6
Netos as Transition Guides	7-9
What Youth Say About Mentors	10
Netos Share the Experience of a Lifetime	11
Transition Checklist for Netos	12-13
Common Concerns of Netos	14
Addressing Difficult Situations	15
Mentor Resources	16
University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service, Institute for Public Sector Innovation	17

For additional information or copies of this publication, contact

Maddy Thibeault

Muskie School of Public Service

University of Southern Maine

P.O. Box 9300, 29 Baxter Boulevard

Portland, Maine 04104-9300

207-780-5834

e-mail: maddyt@usm.maine.edu

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guidebook, *Mentoring Youth in Transition*, was made possible through a grant from the Andrus Family Fund, a philanthropic foundation that explores new perspectives and innovative models as ways to give to those working to create safer environments, physical, emotional, or psychological. The Andrus Board members challenge themselves to contribute to the body of knowledge and experience about what is necessary to create and sustain effective social change. They do this by focusing on transitions – those critical junctures in time and process – that, if properly attended to, affect positive change.

The Andrus Family Fund believes that one vital factor in creating successful social change is “recognizing and addressing the emotional and psychological effects of the change process”. They feel William Bridges’ work on transitions is a helpful framework in defining the psychological process that people experience as they move through change in their life. And as Joan Morse, a New York Consultant, reminds us, “the transition framework, doesn’t tell us what to do but rather how the process will unfold”.

This guide is about helping us understand what is happening with youth in transition – and how we can be most helpful. This information is intended to assist Mentors in their work with youth in and transitioning out of state care. The transition from state care to independence can be a precarious and difficult time as youth move out on their own for the first time, without basic tools, community connections or family support. Mentoring is one resource strategy that can assist youth in making a successful transition.

Partnerships of the Program

The Community Mentoring program is the only program in Maine to specifically match youth in foster care system with a mentor, providing youth opportunities to achieve their hopes, dreams, and aspirations through the creation of meaningful relationships. Community Mentoring plays a direct role in helping youth rebuild a sense of community.

The Community Mentoring program represents a unique partnership between the Bureau of Child and Family Services of the Maine Department of Human Services and the Youth Development Unit of the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine and the community at large.

The Community Mentoring Program Mission

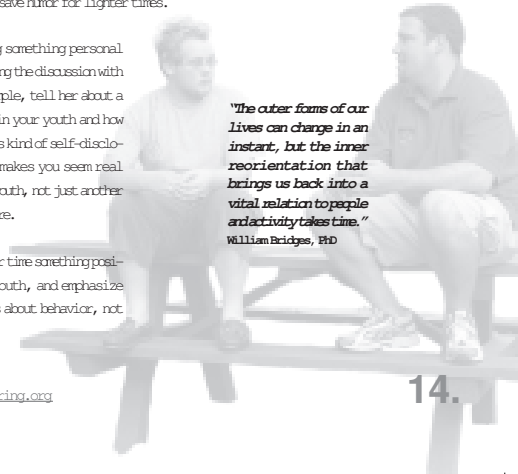
The mission of the Community Mentoring Program is to identify, train, assist and support community volunteers who are willing to make a commitment to developing a healthy relationship that will support youth in foster care and assist them in their transition from foster care to adulthood. The strength of the Community Mentoring Program is found in ongoing support to mentors. Learn more at www.communitymentoring.org

Contributors to this Guidebook include University of Southern Maine Muskie School of Public Service/Youth Development Unit staff members Nancy Markowitz, Nancy Connolly, Rebecca Wertheimer, and Armen Belanger. Joan Morse, Independent Consultant. Design and layout by Goodworks.

Suggestions for Addressing Difficult Situations

- ▶ Face the problem. Ignoring it won’t make it go away. If a problem is really a problem, it’s best to deal with it early, before it gets bigger.
- ▶ Bring things up early in a visit; don’t wait until the end of the visit for an “opportunity time” to present itself. There is probably never a good time to bring up a hard topic, and so it’s best to get to it right away. You’ll never regret how much better you feel after you’ve discussed and resolved a difficult situation.
- ▶ Separate the behavior from the person. Speak objectively about the behavior and positively about the person. For example, “I like your energy, but when you do _____, it puts me in an awkward position.”
- ▶ Don’t overdo humor, teasing, or jokes. A young person will not always grasp issues presented in a half-joking but serious manner. Also, young people’s egos can be unpredictable; what might seem funny one day may not be received in the same vein the next day. The best guideline is to stay serious, but supportive, don’t tease or joke, and save humor for lighter times.
- ▶ Consider relating something personal about yourself during the discussion with the youth. For example, tell her about a similar incident in your youth and how you handled it. This kind of self-disclosure and empathy makes you seem real and special to the youth, not just another adult giving a lecture.
- ▶ Reinforce at a later time something positive about your youth, and emphasize that the issue was about behavior, not personality.

Source: www.mentoring.org



“The outer forms of our lives can change in an instant, but the inner reorientation that brings us back into a vital relation to people and activity takes time.”
William Bridges, PhD

Common Concerns of Mentors

What if my help isn't wanted?

It's not easy to trust a stranger, especially if you're a young person who's had bad experiences with adults in the past. It may take a lot to build up trust. Don't interpret caution as a rejection. A young person may not show it – in fact, he or she may not even know it fully – but your help is definitely wanted.

What if something really serious comes up?

While most mentoring relationships develop and flourish without serious problems, things do happen. Mentors have an important role, but that role does not include medical or psychological treatment, or family counseling. There are support systems in place for real emergencies. The most a mentor is expected to do – and should do – is to help guide a young person to the appropriate professional help. Community mentoring staff members are there to support the mentor.

What if I'm too different to relate well?

Many first-time mentors worry that differences in age, race, religion, education, or gender will be insurmountable barriers. Actually, most experienced mentors report that mentoring a young person from a different background broadened their own horizons and deepened their understanding of other people and cultures.

What if for some reason I can't mentor anymore?

Mentoring is a deep commitment. It will do far more harm than good to enter a young person's life, build up trust, and then abandon the relationship. Be as honest as possible with yourself when committing to be a mentor – for everyone's sake. If you find you must stop mentoring a youth, work with staff to culminate the relationship in a planned and thoughtful manner.

If you are unsure about entering in-depth mentoring, try one of the many shorter-term alternatives, such as tutoring, or one-time projects.

What if I do something wrong?

If you are there for your young person no matter what; if you listen and really hear what's being said; and if you do your best to counsel and not to judge, you will have done everything right. Some youth are more ready than others for a mentor. Some may test a mentor's commitment. Try not to take such behavior personally. Just keep trying your best and keep doing the right things. Additionally, community mentoring program staffs are there to provide support to you.

Material adapted from:
<http://www.mentoring.org/become-a-mentor/basics-of-mentoring>

13.

About Youth in Foster Care

1. Each year approximately 20,000 youth nationwide exit the foster care system (www.casey.org). There are approximately 2,900 children and youth in care in the state of Maine; 1,300 are between the ages of 14–21. This means that 45% of the youth in foster care are teenagers.

2. Children and youth come into foster care for many reasons. The following are some of the reasons for foster care placement:

- Child abuse
- Neglect
- Parental abandonment
- Juvenile court
- Family Crisis

3. According to the 2004 Kids Count Data Book by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the school dropout rate for youth in foster care may be as high as 55%. With high school completion being the minimum entry credential for employment with even modest growth potential, one can understand the impact this high dropout rate has on youth in care. For more information see www.aecf.org/kidscount.

4. There are 2,900 youth in foster care in Maine

5% are in adoptive placements

25% are in residential care –
(residential treatment centers,
group homes, hospital settings)

30% are in therapeutic foster homes

20% are in standard foster care

20% are in other placements that include
their own apartments, with birth parents,
shelters, and unlicensed placements

5. Making it on your own isn't easy – but children aging out of foster care have it especially tough. They are more likely than their peers to face mental health and substance abuse problems, sexually transmitted diseases, involvement with the juvenile justice system and difficulty completing high school. These are among the first findings from Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago's longitudinal study of youth aging out of foster care. See <http://www.chapinhall.org> for more information.

2.

The William Bridges' Transition Framework

William Bridges provides us with a lens to examine the foster care experience. Transitioning out of foster care is a significant life event for youth in the foster care system. More often than not, this transition is a bumpy road characterized by challenges and successes. The presence of caring adult mentors can make a difference in the lives of youth in foster care.

Definition of Mentoring: Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings youth together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee. www.mentoring.org

The transition framework creates a way for mentors to understand the psychological and emotional journey of youth in foster care. Youth in care have experienced many changes; leaving their birth families, changing schools, losing and adding friends, unstable living arrangements, etc. These changes are situational, while transition is an internal process with a psychological reorientation youth must go through before the change is fully processed.

Transition takes longer because it requires youth to attend to three separate phases:

"Endings" – Saying Goodbye

Shifting into the "Neutral Zone"

New "Beginnings" – Moving Forward

3.

The following chart provides a way to understand the transition framework.

Managing the "New Beginning"

- ▷ Have I paid attention to the ending(s) and the neutral zone, or am I trying to make a beginning happen before it possibly can?
- ▷ Have I been a role model for the youth or found supportive resources to help them through the transition process?
- ▷ Have I found ways to celebrate the new beginning and the conclusion of this particular change and time of transition?
- ▷ Have I found ways to symbolize the new identity with the youth?
- ▷ Have I found ways to give youth a piece of the transition to keep as a reminder of the difficult and rewarding journey we all took together?



12.

Transition Checklist for Mentors

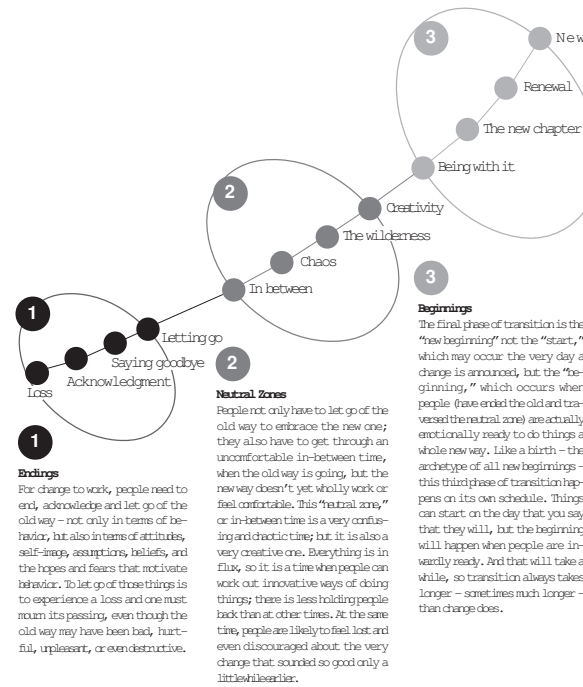
Managing "Endings"

- ▷ Have I focused on this youth's strengths?
- ▷ Do I understand the youth's history and the impact foster care has had on him/her?
- ▷ Have I been careful not to denigrate their past, but rather, found ways/strategies to honor it?
- ▷ Have I thought about the kinds of losses youth have experienced?
- ▷ Have I thought about how this youth has managed these losses?
- ▷ Have I found ways to "reack the ending" in their life?
- ▷ Have I made a plan for giving youth a piece of the past to take with them?

Managing the "Neutral Zone"

- ▷ Have I regularly checked in with the youth?
- ▷ Have I tried to normalize the neutral zone by explaining it as an uncomfortable time that, with careful attention, can be turned into advantages?
- ▷ Have I identified the connections youth have with people who will offer emotional support?
- ▷ Have I set short-range goals with the youth and identified checkpoints along the way?
- ▷ Have I worked with youth to promote life skills and problem solving/critical thinking skills?
- ▷ Have I helped youth transform the losses into opportunities to try doing things a new way?
- ▷ Have I helped youth pursue their interest areas— such as art classes?

11.



WILLIAM BRIDGES, Ph. D.

A pioneer and leader in the field of transition management, Bill Bridges is widely recognized for his breakthrough thinking on how to help people to deal productively with change. One of the most widely quoted management advisers in America today, he is the author of ten books, including his best-selling *Transitions* (1980, 4th printing) and *Managing Transitions* (1992, and also a best-seller). He also wrote two widely read studies of the modern workplace, *Who Suffers?* (1994, the subject of a Fortune cover-story) and *Managing Change*, (1997). His most recent book, *The Way of Transition* (2001) is a partly autobiographical study of how to turn a difficult loss into a time of self-renewal.

Edusated originally in the humanities at Harvard, Columbia, and Brown, he has taught at a number of colleges and universities. A past president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, he is also a founding member of the Financial Times Thought Leader Dialog group.

4.

Promoting Positive Attachment

Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub, around which a person's life revolves, when they are an infant, toddler, schoolchild, adolescence, and throughout their years of maturity into old age. From these intimate attachments a person draws their strength and enjoyment of life and through what they contribute they give strength and enjoyment to others.¹

What mentors can do to promote positive attachment:

Be consistent

- Maintain a steady and regular presence in a young person's life.
- Schedule and keep regular meetings.
- Together, establish rules for the mentoring relationship.
- Check in if you are unable to keep your meeting.
- Talk about what will happen next.

Help mentees express their feelings

- Be a good listener.
- Be honest and open with your mentee.
- Build your relationship on mutual respect and trust.

Relax and have fun

- Engage in activities that your mentee enjoys.
- Create opportunities for your mentee to try new activities.
- Take time to explore a young person's special interest and talents.

Help mentees feel good about themselves

- Learn about and encourage your mentee to explore their strengths, talents and abilities.
- Respect a young person's ideas and point of view.
- Respect a young person's past.
- Pay attention to what youth say.

¹Source: Bowlby, J. (1980) Attachment and Loss, Vol. 3: Sadness and Depression. New York: Basic Books

5.

Mentors share the experience of a lifetime

Youth in foster care are preparing for their future by learning life skills. One of the ways mentors can assist the transition journey is by providing youth with support and opportunities to learn and practice life skills in a "real world" context. The following are some ways community mentors have promoted life skill learning with youth.

Daily Living Skills

- ▼ Cook a meal.
- ▼ Go grocery shopping.
- ▼ Try foods from different countries.
- ▼ Go out to eat at a restaurant to learn how to order from a menu and calculate the tip.

Housing and Community Resources

- ▼ Look for used cars.
- ▼ Look for an apartment.
- ▼ Learn to refinish furniture.
- ▼ Go to local museums, theater, movies, etc.
- ▼ Explore free community events and activities.

Money Management

- ▼ Balance a checkbook.
- ▼ Explain comparison shopping.
- ▼ Develop a budget.

Self Care

- ▼ Set up doctors' appointments.
- ▼ Discuss consequences of using drugs and alcohol.
- ▼ Participate in sports or outdoor activities.

Social Development

- ▼ Write a thank you note.
- ▼ Ask for help in different situations.
- ▼ Learn to make introductions.
- ▼ Discuss goal setting and thoughtful decision making.
- ▼ Celebrate birthdays.

Work and Study Habits

- ▼ Explore career options.
- ▼ Visit colleges.
- ▼ Assist youth with school projects.

10.

What youth say about Mentors

We asked youth in the Community Mentoring Program how they have been and would like to be supported through transitions by their mentor. Here's what they have to say:

- > Work on a big goal with me.
- > Give advice .
- > Show me respect .
- > Explore the future with me.
- > Listen to me.
- > Trust.
- > Celebrate success.
- > Be there for me.
- > Be a best friend.
- > Have faith.
- > Provide encouragement.
- > Allow me to vent.
- > Really get to know me.
- > Understand and respect the boundaries in our relationship.
- > Spark interest.
- > Ask how to help me.
- > Provide a positive influence.
- > Share experiences with me.
- > Just hang out together.
- > Be in a relationship that is outside of the foster care system.
- > Respect confidentiality/trust.
- > Be consistent.
- > Help me with planning.
- > Be supportive of me.

9.



Mentors as Transition Guides

The following mentoring relationships are examples of different ways to support youth through their endings, managing the neutral zone and moving forward to their new beginnings.

"Endings" CASE STUDY *Joyce and Katie*

Joyce and Katie were matched a month ago and are both excited about beginning their relationship. Their plan is to get together every couple of weeks.

Katie lives in a group home and will be turning eighteen in a few months giving her the choice of whether to remain in state care. The rules and point systems at the group home have been all she has known and the thought of more freedom and independence is beginning to make her nervous. She is doing well in school and looking forward to her senior year of high school. She thinks she wants to go on to post secondary education and the staff at the group home has been very supportive of her plan. She recently started and is enjoying her work in the local library.

In the past Katie had supervised visits with her birth mother but has decided to end those visits because her mother would rarely show up.

Ways a mentor can support a youth during the "Ending" stage.

- Routinely check in to let Katie know she you are committed to the relationship and will be there for her.
- Set up a special time for them to celebrate Katie's birthday together.
- Give Katie time to talk about how life in the group home changed once she turned eighteen.
- Offer to help Katie make a book of her life.
- Share information about your own eighteenth birthday.
- Point out to Katie the importance of an eighteenth birthday in foster care including information about the option of a V-9 placement (a negotiated written agreement for extended care) and higher education tuition waivers.
- Talk with Katie about her future goals.
- Ask Katie what kind of support she needs to help her reach her goals.



6.

"Neutral Zone"
CASE STUDY
Sophie and Rachel

Sophie and Rachel were matched a year ago. Sophie was living in a foster home, attending high school, was involved in school activities and had an after-school job. She had limited contact with her birth family but still felt very connected to them.

The mentor pair hit it off immediately and began weekly meetings; going shopping, out to eat, for walks, and to the movies. Although Rachel had a busy life she managed to make time for Sophie.

During this time Sophie was assigned a new social worker, turned 18 and began having more contact with her birth mother. Her mother asked her to move back home and she decided to do it, changing high schools and quitting her after-school job.

Sophie was immediately overwhelmed with her new school, her responsibilities for her younger siblings and the frequent arguments with her mother. She stopped contact with her foster family and stopped calling or returning Rachel's calls. Rachel was hurt and confused and didn't understand why Sophie had cut her out of her life.

Sophie and Rachel met with Community Mentoring staff and Sophie told Rachel why she hadn't returned her calls. Rachel explained to Sophie how she felt let down but still wanted to be part of her life. They decided to continue their relationship and only get together once a month. Rachel reminded Sophie that she was always available by phone or e-mail.

Ways a mentor can help a youth in the "Neutral Zone".

- Remember not to take personally any changes in the relationship.
- Remember the significance of birth family to youth in care.
- Understand how a youth might struggle with choices when faced with the possibility of returning home.
- Support the young person in their decisions.
- Understand how a youth might handle this change differently than they would.
- Use this situation as a learning opportunity about different ways of communicating.
- Continue to offer unconditional support through phone calls, cards and e-mails.
- Re-negotiate how the mentoring relationship can occur e.g., meetings, activities, etc.
- Support youth in using this relationship in planning for future relationships.

7.



"New Beginnings"
CASE STUDY
Sam and Alex

Sam has been in foster care since he was four and was matched with Alex when he was sixteen. They have had a Mentoring relationship for five years. Over the years Sam lived in many foster homes and was given an option of out of state adoption. He chose to stay in foster care to keep consistent his school, community and relationships.

Alex, a middle school teacher, began spending time with Sam bowling, eating out, playing video games and having him visit with his family. They always kept in touch either by visiting, phone or e-mail.

As Sam aged the relationship changed. Sam, now in college, has a part time job and actively participates in a youth advocacy group for youth in care. These activities provide him a positive identity and purpose. He has created a solid network of people and though there have been several detours in his plan for independence he is in a good place in his life.

Sam credits Alex with teaching him about communication and friendship. He continues to attend family celebrations at Alex's home and feels he can call Alex anytime and talk with him about everything. He knows that Alex will always be there for him as a friend.

Ways a mentor can help a youth during "New Beginnings".

- Provide ongoing support and resources while a young person is going through transition.
- Provide guidance and friendship.
- Teach good communication skills by modeling them yourself.
- Help recognize and celebrate accomplishments.
- Help plan for other changes and transition that will occur.

8.