

Staton L., has been a Family Partnership mentor since December 2008; He's a member at Central United Methodist Church (CUM).

Staton has mentored a middle-age single dad who had recently been downsized from his job as an HVAC (Heating and Air Condition) installer and was growing more and more discouraged. He was facing dwindling financial resources, feared losing his home as his unemployment barely covered his house payments and had growing health challenges. He was referred by his local minister to Family Partnership for support during and hopefully through this trying time. We caught up with Staton this August to talk to him about the mentor's side of the relationship. Staton, himself, was retired from a long successful career of self-employment that he had carved out for himself. He had raised a family so knew about the struggles and concerns his partner faced there as well.

FP (Family Partnership): How did you first hear about and why did you become interested in Family Partnership and personally becoming a mentor?

SL: Sue H (a Family Partnership mentor since 2006 and member at CUM) brought it to my attention at the mission committee meeting at Central, on which we both sit. I've always felt mentoring was important. I've had it in my life – maybe not formally but I've always had people I could go to for advice and to support me.

(Staton followed his interest by attending Family Partnerships Mentor Exploration which we held at Central and that is required of all potential mentors prior to becoming a mentor.)

FP: how did attending the Mentor Exploration help you in this process?

SL: That was first step – I felt from that, that it something I was willing to give a shot.

I think it's important to have that interest in another person and something like this – there's no financial interest or other personal gain reasons involved – in a mentor situation you're looking out for the best interest of the mentee.

FP: Tell me about your first meeting with J?

SL: We got together and discovered we had some common interests - in hockey (note: both had been involved in leagues at the local level) for one thing. That was a nice starting point - we sort of knew each other through that. That was an opportunity right there for mutual respect for each other. As we talked, I was impressed that he had a good work ethic. I felt he was an innocent victim of the economic housing downturn – it affected his field of work.

FP: So then what happened?

SL: We agreed to continue to meet. We just discussed things and tried to find out what his goals were. I think goal setting was important right from day one. As he's met those goals, he's gained confidence in his ability and the system. He's called on Family Partnership services quite often.

FP: How do you feel about mentoring J and how it is going?

SL: We've developed a real healthy relationship. He's not afraid to call me and I call him. Recently, he's had some good news. He got a part time job at Menard's. He also just heard that he got a position with a friend; - it won't be full-time right now - but doing HVAC work. He and I just talked last week about not giving up on Menards, even so, as that could develop into something – management or something. Then, he also has a business of his own in mind and we are continuing to work on that.

FP: How has mentoring affected you personally and your faith?

SL: Well, it's just rewarding; I think we're having good results. He comes to me for advice, and when he takes the advice - for example we worked together on a letter for college and he's kept those changes - that's rewarding. It's working the way it's supposed to. I encourage other people to do the same thing, based on my experience.

FP: I wonder, for you - what kind of time has been involved? That's the number one question people ask as they consider this. Obviously you have to make room in your life and schedule to meet with someone else.

SL: In this particular case, the amount of time has been very reasonable. I'm not much into meetings - I'd rather meet with him than a group but the group meetings (once a month mentor support meetings with other mentors and the supervisor that FP asks mentors to attend) have been beneficial. I always find them helpful. And I've really enjoyed getting to know J and his family.

FP: Thanks Staton. Keep up the good work. It has been exciting to see both your satisfaction with mentoring and J's blossoming confidence, as well as his improved health and how his situation is improving and stabilizing. His daughter's confidence has obviously soared as well, as you and J have found ways to maintain her involvement in her special interest.