

# Hesson puts his time where kids are

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Terry Hesson is a man who puts his time where his money is.

Hesson, a former juvenile attorney, is a mentor for kids involved in the Bridgeport Communities in Schools dropout prevention program.

Hesson said the volunteer work is fun for him and he doesn't understand why some people consider volunteering to be a sacrifice.

"Someone asked me what is involved in mentoring and I told him you do the same things you do now, but you involve the kid," Hesson said.

Hesson got involved with the program at its onset. He was sergeant at arms for the Space Center Rotary Club when Huey Barnett, director of Bridgeport, first came to speak to Rotary about his idea to start the dropout prevention program.

Hesson met with Barnett and discussed the work Hesson had done as a youth volunteer in the past. That was in 1988 and this summer Hesson will be a mentor for four Bridgeport students.

The program has been slow to start, but Hesson said he has about 22 Rotary volunteers for this summer's program. The volunteers will fill out a profile and be matched with a student who shares his interests.

"I had one man come to me and say he'd like to volunteer but he's 72 years old and doesn't get out much. He wanted to know what good he would be to the program. It turns out he's a computer engineer, and we have a kid that does nothing but play video games. This kid even designs video games and tries to sell them to Nintendo. It shows you that there is a kid out there for everyone," Hesson said.

Hesson has been a volunteer for the last 17 years. He worked as a juvenile lawyer for 10 years but described the Bridgeport kids as a whole different set.

"They haven't been in trouble yet. We're here to help prevent the problems before they happen," Hesson said.

The students involved in the summer programs do not look to their mentors for vocational guidance, Hesson said. The mentor doesn't give a kid specific advice, but acts as a friend. Hesson said some of these kids don't have anyone to give them attention.

"They suffer from low self esteem, which lands them in the wrong peer groups, and they don't have anyone who will take time for them," Hesson said.

Hesson said there is one kid whom he would meet for lunch once a week.

"It seems like a little thing. We wouldn't even leave the campus, but just the idea that a businessman would take time out of his day to

meet with him meant so much to that boy," Hesson said.

The concept of needing a father plays a big part in the life of underachievers, Hesson said. He said out of all the students he has mentioned, all but one were from broken homes and living with their mothers.

"They don't have a positive male role model. There is no one there to show them how to act and give them the discipline they need," Hesson said.

The Bridgeport program centers

on junior high school kids in their early teens. Although Bridgeport does have a pilot program at Clear Creek High School, Hesson said the program is perfect for junior high school age students.

"They need it the most because they are at the age where they are most neglected. The elementary kids are mommies' babies and get all the attention, and once a high school kid gets that drivers license, he's gone. But the junior high kids are going through a rough time," Hesson said.



Terry Hesson takes time out from being an attorney to act as a mentor for at-risk students in the Bridgeport Communities in Schools program.