

Elevations

Latest news and updates from the Education Elevators Foundation



December 2019



A Message from the Executive Director

We've been busy here at Education Elevators! Last year, we launched programs at Kanawha City Elementary (in partnership with Potesta & Associates), Central Elementary (in partnership with Orders Construction) and ProKids Afterschool Program (in partnership with Advantage Technology). Last month, we launched a program at the Mary C. Snow site of the Bob Burdette Center in partnership with Steptoe & Johnson. We currently have 75 Elevator and student pairs. To support our growth, we hired 3 amazing part time program coordinators.

It's encouraging that so many businesses and business professionals are getting involved with the youth in our community. There could not be a more critical time to act.

Here are some startling statistics:

- WV has the highest number of deaths from opioid overdoses, youth entering foster care and living with grandparents nationwide. In Kanawha County, almost a whopping 60% of grandparents are raising their grandchildren.
- WV has the highest number of kids in foster care in the nation. (17.8 per 1000 youth). Due to the opioid crisis, the number of kids in foster care has increased 45% in the past 8 years (over 300% higher than the national average).
- WV has the highest rate of transient kids/couch surfers in the nation.
- One in ten children in WV currently has a parent in prison.
- WV is ranked 8th for the most underprivileged states for youth based on a combo score of socio-economic/welfare rank, health rank and education rank.

In March 2015, Harvard's Center on the Developing Child released a study finding that every child that has been able to succeed in the face of adversity "*had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult.*"

Elevators provide guidance and support to students who are experiencing trauma (i.e. abuse or neglect; a parent or loved one who is using drugs or has overdosed in front of them; transition into the foster care system, etc.). The relationship a student has with his or her Elevator is often the only stable and healthy relationship in that child's life. One guidance counselor remarked that the kids had "Christmas morning" smiles on when their Elevators walked in. She followed up by saying, "these kids usually don't have a lot to smile about -- even on Christmas morning!"

Elevators are also making a difference in the lives of students who are struggling socially and/or academically. This is what one teacher said recently: "Rhonda's support has been great for Shawn. He has a speech impediment and the relationship with Rhonda has helped him to be confident. In addition, Rhonda has helped Shawn to become a lover of school. His reading and math skills have also improved."

Thank you to our Elevators, donors and other supporters that make our work possible! We are seeking funds to support our existing programs and to help us reach more students who are desperately in need of a mentor or a friend.

I hope that you will consider making a tax deductible contribution to support Education Elevators this year!

Sincerely,

Allison McJunkin

When confronted with the fallout of childhood trauma, why do some children adapt and overcome, while others bear lifelong scars that flatten their potential? A growing body of evidence points to one common answer: Every child who winds up doing well has had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult.

-Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2015

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Elevator Spotlight

How long have you been matched with William? I started meeting with him last spring and it has been one of my biggest blessings. He is now a huge part of my life. I believe he may have helped me more than I will ever help him.

How would you describe William? He loves to play and imagine. He is happy and loving and his smile lights up the room.

What do you enjoy most about your time with William? I enjoy being able to step away from my busy world and just be a kid, with him. We play and laugh and just forget about the rest of the world for a while.

Have you noticed any changes in William since you have started meeting with him? He opens up to me about his life and how he feels. I see him being more comfortable to talk about his feelings, which has traditionally been a struggle for him.

What do you like best about being an Elevator? The sense of making a difference in someone's life. Being a part of the program that gives children so much confidence and enthusiasm for school and friendships. The smile and hug of pure joy when I arrive and leave each visit, is more than I could ask for!



Chris May with his student William

-Chris May
Advantage Technology Elevator

Teacher Perspective

Chris is honestly, I believe, the best part of William's week. If William is having a bad day Chris is usually readily available to come see him and always tries his best to be there for him. He even attends student conferences when he can!

William has a rough home life, so seeing Chris is something he really looks forward to. Chris knows when his birthday is and visited him an extra day that week. He is a 100% constant in his life!

-Carli Bourne
Piedmont Elementary Teacher

Education Elevators provides mentors for some of our struggling students. Students eagerly look forward to the day their Elevator comes. They are so excited to have someone just for them and I have already noticed changes in behaviors and attitudes as a result!



Miyonna's attendance and behavior have improved and she also talks a little more. She gets really excited for Mondays when Nina comes to see her.

- Jill Woodrum,
Executive Director, PRO-Kids

'Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.'

-Leo Buscaglia

PARTNER PROFILE - ADVANTAGE TECHNOLOGY



Nina Shell with her student Miyona

Why We Partner: We were first introduced to EE through a presentation at our local Rotary Club. Personally, what attracted me to the organization was having the opportunity to be the difference in a child's life. Thankfully, I always had a solid role model in my mother. Without the fortune of having her in my life, I could have been that student that needed someone. I want each of the students seeking an Elevator to know that someone in the world cares about them, no matter what may be going on in their lives.

Impact on Business: Many employees say that their favorite day of the week is the day they're able to visit their student. It's important to Advantage to give back to the community in any way we have the opportunity. With the struggles West Virginia faces, it's important to make an impact in the future of the state we call home. I can't think of a better investment of time than improving the life of a child, encouraging them that they are worthy and capable.

Elevator's Perspective: I enjoy being able to take an hour and just act like a kid. Whether it's painting, making bracelets or trying our luck at yoga, I have an hour of dedicated time that the outside world is "shut off" and I am present. It's made me a better parent, understanding the value of putting the phone (and with it work) down occasionally to live in the moment.

-Nina Shell,
Advantage Technology Elevator



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Make Your Impact!
The generous donations from people like you are what enable us to make a difference in the lives of kids that need it most. We greatly appreciate gifts of any size. Consider making a tax deductible donation today and join us in helping kids take flight!

Be the Change that you Wish to See in the World

I was approached about the Education Elevators Program over a year ago and it was presented to me as a way to overcome small challenges before they become huge problems, the huge problems that have a drastic effect on us and our society. Problems like crime, homelessness, addiction, violence against women, etc. This is where I became interested.

You may be thinking, like I was, how do we fix these issues by working with children? Great question!

Social learning scientists have shown that much of the learning that occurs during a child's development is acquired through observation and imitation. When asked, most of us would agree that children learn from role models and imitate behaviors of those they admire.



The question then is not, "Do children imitate adults?" but, "Which behaviors of adults do children imitate?" And, "How can we make it more likely they will imitate positive behaviors rather than negative behaviors?"

With this being the case, what happens to kids with no positive role models or only ones that show them all of the wrong behaviors? They develop what appear to be small challenges that turn into huge problems later in life.

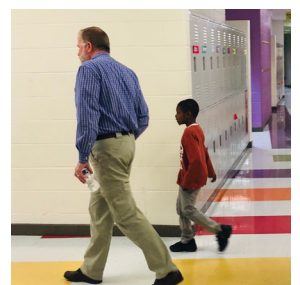
Without the proper people to look up to and guide them, they have no idea how to make right decisions. They are kids, after all.

This is where Education Elevators comes in. You all know of the problems we face as a city, state and country and how many of these problems begin in childhood. Knowing this, we must step up and try to help the little ones that may not have a shot without us.

-Chris May

New Partnerships

Here are some photos from the Steptoe & Johnson Orientation. The students particularly enjoyed giving their new Elevators a tour of the school!





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Yoga at Piedmont

Fall 2019

“The most rewarding experience of the week was with a 5th grade girl. I remembered her from last year. Last year she didn’t participate at all. She sat on the bench to the side. This year she didn’t participate the first day of PE that week, but did the second day. She came up and hugged me after the second session and told me how much she loved it and how fun it was.”
 - Stacy Christian, Yoga Instructor



This Fall, Education Elevators sponsored week long yoga instruction for kids from Kindergarten through 5th grade. Yoga has been proven to help build student confidence, improve concentration and focus, help kids manage stress, improve flexibility and increase blood flow. The sessions, led by Yoga instructor, Stacy Christian, focused on breathing, yoga poses and relaxation. Most kids reported that the breathing and relaxation techniques helped them feel calm.

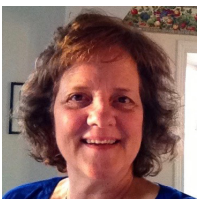
The younger students also had the opportunity to ‘Be the Teacher’ and come up with poses in the shape of an animal or an object. This taught them leadership skills and also respect for each other. All the students enjoyed themselves and most importantly learned valuable skills!

Meet Our New Team Members



Elizabeth Kantor-Bright
 Program Coordinator

Elizabeth has worked in school systems in West Virginia for over 40 years. She has been employed as a School Counselor, Director of a Non-Profit Community Rehabilitation Facility, Transition Specialist and as a Speech Language Pathologist. She is our Program Coordinator in Berkeley County and oversees the Base Buddy program with the Air National Guard.



Kathy Thomas
 Program Coordinator

Kathy has been teaching in public schools in Kanawha County, WV for the past 15 years. She is currently a Special Education teacher at Dunbar Intermediate School. Kathy is one of our Program Coordinators in Kanawha County & does a wonderful job coordinating our Business Partnerships with Piedmont Elementary & ProKids After School Program.



Stacey Losh
 Program Coordinator

Stacey has worked as a school teacher for almost 20 years in both Tennessee and WV. She worked at the June Harless Center at Marshall University assisting counties throughout the state, but now works for the WV Department of Education. She was a School Coordinator for Education Elevators at Edgewood Elementary and currently serves as a Program Coordinator working with Edgewood Elementary & The Bob Burdette Center.



Education Elevators is partnering up with the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative (WVPEC)! One of our areas of focus is their Speakers’ Bureau. The Speakers’ Bureau is a comprehensive database of speakers across West Virginia who are willing to step into the classroom or use channels like Skype to educate students about the career opportunities available to them.

If you are interested in being a speaker, please contact Donna Peduto directly at: dpeduto@mail.wvu.edu

Visit: <https://www.wvpec.com/events-and-initiatives/wv-k-12-speakers-bureau> for more information