

August 10, 2002

Dear Returning Mentor:

I hope your summers have been both exciting and rewarding! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Colby Cares About Kids (CCAK) coordinator for 2002-2003 and to congratulate you on a year of superb community service to the greater Waterville area. My name is Chris Sussman and I am a 2002 Colby graduate. As a senior I participated in CCAK at the Alford Youth Center while completing my major in Anthropology and minor in Environmental Studies. The formulation and execution of CCAK has been a remarkable community effort and I am very excited to be the coordinator of such an influential program. CCAK's inaugural year saw an incredible amount of excitement and enthusiasm under the remarkable organization and direction of Teresa Hawko and I look forward to carrying on the breadth and depth of CCAK's positive impact within the local community. Although a new batch of potential mentors will be on the scene as we welcome in a new school year and the class of 2006 to campus, you represent the heart of this program and are testimony to the success it has seen thus far.

By the spring of last year approximately 150 mentor/mentee relationships had been formed and the positive impact of the program was confirmed by the data and comments within the spring evaluations. Although there is a wealth of information to be gained from the mentor, mentee, teacher and parent evaluations, it is clear that all of you have had a significant impact on the lives of these kids. A snapshot of the evaluation data shows that approximately 80% of mentees responded that the relationship with their mentor made them feel more confident and approximately 90% of mentees responded that they felt happy when with their mentor. The comments from the mentee evaluations are priceless and reveal the positive impacts mentors have when they act as consistent positive role models in the lives of their mentees. One mentee commented, "By her spending time with me and doing stuff with me, and listening to me, I feel better about myself" and another mentee stressed how much he looked forward to seeing his mentor and how he would wait at the door five minutes before his mentor's arrival. These children truly cherish your presence and are stronger people because of your commitment.

As a mentor this past year I realize it is often difficult to comprehend the impact one has when mentoring for just two hours a week and I hope some of the data and comments above reaffirm the importance of your function as a role-model and friend. I can assure you that the positive impact you have had on the lives of these children is absolutely amazing. I would like to get the program running as soon as students arrive back on campus in September. It will be difficult to do this if I do not hear from you regarding your plans for the fall and spring semester. **Please drop me a quick e-mail or voicemail message so I can be sure that you intend to continue mentoring and please indicate what semesters (if any) you are going to be available. It is important that I hear from you, regardless of what your plans are.** I can be reached via phone at (207) 872-3098 or by e-mail at cpsussma@colby.edu. Thanks for taking the time to read this and I will see you in September!

Sincerely,

Christopher Sussman
Colby Cares About Kids Coordinator