



MENTORING

According to Webster's dictionary, a mentor is "someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person." Have you been a mentor? Have you been mentored by someone?

I was recently asked to name my most important female mentor, which led me to reflect on the many people I have had as mentors, models and teachers. Some were people who led by example, quietly dedicating time to service or caring for others. Others were teachers I had in high school, college or graduate school who listened to my interests and guided me on this path. There have also been work supervisors and colleagues who have helped me, professionally and personally.

When I started this job, I relied heavily on guidance from the board and founders of PSRC, as I had no prior executive director experience. And every day I interact with people who model for me how to navigate aging with dignity. I am grateful for all of these gifts of mentoring. I know that I have thanked some of them, but I wonder if I have adequately acknowledged what I have learned. It can often mean a great deal to be recognized, even years later. Many people don't know that they have changed a life without even consciously giving advice, or knowing if their suggestions were followed.

As we move into middle age plus, others look to us to be mentors, giving guidance to those who are less experienced as professionals, raising families, travelling, volunteering and in other aspects of life. In some cultures, this is commonly honored as "sage wisdom." I think it is important to embrace this role, to wear it proudly, with dignity and purpose. It can be very rewarding.

I think of our GrandPals as mentors. They read with children in local schools, demonstrating their love of exploring the world through literature. At the same time, they are encouraging new readers to master this core skill for future learning. Possibly just as significant, they also convey the message "I believe in you" which has been proven to be a key factor in lifelong resilience.

PSRC also has mentors in our computer lab who are teaching and encouraging people, sometimes people older than themselves, to master the skills that are so essential in today's world of electronic communication. We also have mentor/teachers of art, yoga, knitting and poetry, demonstrating that all of us have a skill that someone else wants to learn, at any age.

One of the key components explored in our Engaged Retirement program is that this is the time of life to share our gifts and to find purpose in helping others, using talents we have built

over the years or finding novel opportunities to help others in ways we have not tried but have long wanted to do. PSRC can help you explore volunteer opportunities that suit your interests.

Make 2015 the year you discover the mentor within, and make a point to thank those who have guided you in your life.

Susan W. Hoskins, LCSW