The Connect Reading SAY YES CHALLENGE

Connect Reading is looking for business mentor volunteers to work with the young people of Reading on a new Connect Reading Say Yes Challenge.

Committed and enthusiastic individuals will be "buddied-up" with a small group of young people (aged 13-18yrs) and provide support and guidance as they form their own mini social enterprise "companies".

No specialist knowledge is required; we are simply looking for people (working in pairs) who can guide young people through the team building process of self-directional project management, and support them as they develop their ideas into workable businesses.

This is an exciting opportunity for you to be a genuine partner and share (and maybe even develop) your own skills and experience by becoming engaged with young people through a really valuable and meaningful community based challenge.

This project is a business challenge partnered with the issues of crime and anti-social behaviour to form a social enterprise project. Over the last five years Say Yes Challenges have taken place all around the country and if you would like to know more about these Challenges, please look at the website – www.sayyesuk.com

It is expected that up to sixty four young people from the Reading area will participate in the Challenge, and each group of young people (no more than eight in a group) will form a social enterprise "company" with which two mentor volunteers from the business world will be working.

Over the course of twelve to fourteen weeks the young people will come up with an idea that they will then present at a special finals night. The Challenge has been devised to enable young people to observe, investigate, evaluate and come up with workable ideas that will promote young people in a positive light.

The Challenge is tailored to meet the needs of the local community and to complement local strategies. At the centre of the Challenge is the concept of genuine youth empowerment through an active citizenship and social enterprise approach.

The Mentor Role

By volunteering to become a business mentor you would be joining a growing band of committed and community-minded individuals who are sharing their experience, knowledge and time to inspire young people.

The role of mentor is both demanding and challenging, but ultimately very satisfying. You may learn new skills along the way but in particular your knowledge and expertise, along with your experience, will be used by mentoring a diverse group of young people.

As a business mentor you will be called upon to guide, advise, challenge and arbitrate for your team. It is not your responsibility to complete challenge work, but to facilitate completion of the project.

Time Commitment

Mentors will be working in pairs to share the responsibility of the role. The Challenge will run for approximately twelve academic weeks from the launch event in Spring 2010 and culminate in a Finals & Presentation Awards night in the summer (dates tbc)

Mentor involvement is needed as follows:

- Attendance at the full day challenge launch event (9am-3pm)
- Approximately weekly "board" meetings with the "companies" for about 45 minutes to 1 hour (meeting facilities will be available and days and times are flexible – mentors can choose to meet in pairs or host alternate meetings)
- "E-mentoring" contact with the young people as required
- Attendance at the finals event (afternoon/evening)
- Your main objective is to mentor the young people through the Challenge. However, the young people should be encouraged to work through this Challenge unaided at times and on their own initiative
- A training session for mentors who have signed up will be held and along with a mentor handbook and guidance notes you will have the full support of the Challenge co-ordinators throughout the Challenge

N.B. *A Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Check will be mandatory and will be carried out prior to the Challenge start at no cost to volunteers.*

For further information please contact any of the following:

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