

TeamMates program makes its way to Louisburg



TeamMates program director DeMoine Adams speaks to students at Broadmoor Elementary last week about the new TeamMates program in Louisburg.

Aaron Bauer, like many other people throughout country, spends part of his day cycling through hundreds of emails.

Then one day, Bauer saw one that caught his eye – it came from his mentee.

You see, Bauer served as mentor to this child in rural Nebraska before making the move to Louisburg. It was part of a program called TeamMates.

Three years after moving to Louisburg, Bauer's mentee graduated high school and sent him, what Bauer called, "the coolest email I have ever received."

"Aaron, Thank you. Towards the end of the year, Ms. White showed me a picture of our first match. It reminded me of the matches and our time together. You helped a lot during TeamMates, more than you will ever know, and I'll be forever

grateful.”

Bauer really wasn't sure what kind of an impact he was having with his mentee, and if it was even making that much of a difference this child's life.

One email changed all that.

“Unfortunately, I had to move do to my career,” Bauer said.

“My TeamMate

graduated this last spring, three years after I moved. I remember as

school was ending earlier this spring telling my wife that my TeamMate would

graduate and I asked the rhetorical question, “Do you think I had any

impact?” A couple of weeks later, after his graduation and during his

summer break, he wrote me a 4-page email because he wanted to update me on his

life and tell me how much our time meant to him.”

The TeamMates program has created several stories like that through

Nebraska and surrounding states and now it is making its way to Kansas – more specifically

– Broadmoor Elementary in Louisburg.

Louisburg is one of 10 school districts in Kansas that have begun using

TeamMates, a mentoring program that pairs a community volunteer with a student.

That mentor would spend time once a week with their mentee to do things the

student enjoys.

“I think it is a great opportunity

for our students,” Louisburg program coordinator Sara McIntire

said. "We are a small-town, and while we are close to the city or to Overland Park, we have a lot of kids that don't have the resources to go do some of those things. We might have kids who are good at sports like basketball, and have the opportunity to get coached by an adult, but not everyone gets opportunities like that. I also think our community is special. If a family has a need, and people became aware of it, we wrap ourselves around that and resources come out of the woodwork."

TeamMates Mentoring Program

began in 1991 with the vision of University of Nebraska Head Football Coach Tom Osborne and his wife Nancy. Coach Osborne felt that the athletes in his program could make an impact on the middle school students, and twenty-two football players began meeting with middle school students in the Lincoln Public Schools.

Of the 22 original mentees, 21 went on to graduate from high school while one left school early to pursue a successful Motocross career. Eighteen of the original mentees also obtained some form of post-secondary education.

Since that time, the program has expanded throughout Nebraska and into surrounding states to help create those connections to help in a child's life.

On Nov. 4, TeamMates program director DeMoine Adams and training and match support manager Allyson Horne made the trip to Louisburg to speak to the Broadmoor Elementary staff and students about the program.

“Our hope, as we started as an organization, is to be able to give kids more opportunities to be feel heard and to give mentors more of an opportunity to see what is happening in school districts today and make a difference,” Horne said. “I don’t think any of us could have ever predicted 10,000 matches, five states and so much ripple effect of the impact.

“My own daughter matched with her mentor when she was in fifth grade. She is now 23 and recently became a mentor herself and we have lots of stories like that where we have former mentees who are now becoming mentors. We have three former mentees who work for the central office. As a mentor, my hope was always to make a difference in my mentee’s life, but I would say they probably changed mine more than anything else.”

Later in the evening, the school provided mentor training for interested participants, and according to McIntire, had 43 possible mentors go through training. By the following Thursday, more than 40 students signed up that they were interested in the program.

“I always tell mentors that it is ok to say ‘I don’t know, or I’m not sure,’” Horne said. “I think my mentee loves doing crafts with me because she knows that I am terrible at them.

She likes to see me struggle I think. When we let our mentee's teach us, I think some phenomenal things happen with trust-building. It also takes a lot of pressure off of a mentor.

"It has been a unique experience to be here already. To come in and already see the space created for mentors and mentees to meet has just been amazing. The school staff has a lot of energy for it and Sara's dedication...43 mentors who are going to be trained is not typical right at the start. For us to come in and feel totally welcomed, but also this excitement and energy, is unique for us. My role for DeMoine and myself, we travel program-wide, so we are in South Dakota, Wyoming, we are in Kansas this month and a lot of communities in Nebraska. When there is already a culture of belonging and welcoming in a community, we know this is a great fit and I can already see that.

As good of a first step as that is, McIntire said they will always be looking for new mentors as they hope to one day build the program into the middle and high school levels.

"We would love for the community to embrace this on an even bigger level," McIntire said. "We have some businesses already, like First Option Bank and Louisburg Family Dental, who are having all their employees sign up to be mentors. It is awesome that businesses are supporting their staff and the giving of their time. We would love to see

that spread. I think the possibilities are endless. I think the legacy of the program speaks for itself.”

Bauer, who has seen what the program has done for students first-hand, is taking on a big role in the Louisburg program as the advisory board president.

Other community members, Becky Bowes (vice-president), T.J. Williams (treasurer), Jennifer Heston (secretary), Connie Barbour, Nick White, Dave Tappan, Dave Alexander, Kristine Lowry, Tim Johnson and Jim Real are all serving on the advisory board, and along with building coordinator Amy Buffington, all hope to see the program take off.

“I am not the type of person that typically gets excited about a whole lot, but I am super excited about TeamMates coming to Louisburg,” Bauer said. “All my colleagues that mentored through TeamMates had similar positive, unique stories. The special part of being a TeamMates mentor is that you are matched with a student based on common interests and you remain TeamMates until the mentee graduates. TeamMates is also unique in today’s world in that it is designed to focus on the student’s strengths, and the meetings must be face to face in a safe environment. There are no phone calls, texts, social media, etc. interactions allowed with your mentee.

“Initially, I would anticipate the impact of mentoring will not be as evident until trust is built between the students and the mentors. In a few years,

and from then
on, I expect the impact to be very noticeable and it will only
continue to
grow. TeamMates has quite a bit of research though Gallup and
the
resulting data shows the positive impact on students that have
had a
mentor. Often, it reaches far beyond school academics and
truly has a
long-lasting and profound impact in the lives of the kids.”

For those that
are interested in becoming a mentor, or want to learn more
about the program,
contact McIntire at mcintires@usd416.org
or 913-837-1973.

You can also
visit www.teammates.org to learn more
about the program and view testimonials from those mentors and
mentees that
have been impacted.