



**Contact:** Sandi Grimm  
YouthFriends  
816.268.3343  
grimm@youthfriends.org

### **National School-Based Mentoring/Volunteerism Conference Coming to Kansas City**

Kansas City, Mo. – February 24, 2009 – The fourth edition of the National School-Based Mentoring and Volunteerism Conference will be held in Kansas City, Mo. from June 16-18, at the Downtown Marriott.

Held biennially in Kansas City since 2003, the conference is expected to draw more than 300 mentoring professionals, educators, school board members, community leaders, researchers and funders from across the country and abroad.

Connecting adult volunteer mentors with students in schools has increased in popularity over the past 15 years as communities and school districts see it as a way to close the mentoring gap and increase civic engagement in schools. Locally, YouthFriends, which sponsors the conference, has connected more than 39,000 screened and trained volunteer mentors with kids in more than 100 Missouri and Kansas school districts.

“This conference,” says Lisa Adkins, YouthFriends president, “gives seasoned veterans as well as those new to the community the opportunity to learn, network and share best practices. The content is designed to energize attendees and provide them the tools they need to grow and sustain school-based mentoring in their communities.”

Adkins adds that interest in the conference has been heightened this year by the new administration’s call for national service. Volunteerism to help build communities and improve schools is inherent in the goals of school-based mentoring. Additionally research indicates that students who are mentored by adult volunteers show improvements in academics, attendance and school connectedness, a predictor of higher graduation rates.

Among the featured speakers at the June conference are Shawn Achor, a former Harvard University psychology professor and current CEO of Aspirant, an applied research consulting firm; Maxine Clark, a retail industry leader with a national reputation for trend spotting and the founder of the Build-a-Bear Workshops; Tom Bloch, teacher, co-founder of the University Academy Charter School, author of Stand for the Best and former CEO of H&R Block; Scott Ginsberg, the NameTag Guy, an expert on approachability and connecting with others and Dr. Susan Weinberg, president of The Mentoring Group.

For further information about the conference and early bird rates, visit <http://www.askusa.com/youthfriends>.

# # #