



JPA

Juvenile Protective Association



January 2018

“They don’t set out to be criminals. They’re just desperate people.”

My car was stolen last weekend. The last time I saw it was Friday night after work as I pulled into a secured parking garage under my condo building. It’s a strange sensation walking to the slot where your vehicle is supposed to be and see empty space. Is it possible, I wondered, that I was so tired I parked in someone else’s’ spot? Had I parked my car outside? No, it was gone. Stolen, as it turns out.

At 2:30 am Monday, I received a call from a detective in Dubuque, Iowa. My car had been recovered. Apparently, it had been taken by a local Chicago resident well known to the police. This individual has a history of car theft – and of mental illness. When she ran out of gas in Dubuque, she called the police for help. According to the detective, she took the car to escape from a stranger who wanted to murder her. I can only imagine her terror.

While it appears she threw everything in my car out the window, it also appears she didn’t personally keep the gifts in the trunk or my makeup or my gym bag with an unworn pair of recently purchased sneakers. She tossed it all. And she seems to have been a careful driver. My car was returned without a scratch on it.

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Once the car was recovered, I worked with a local detective who told me 50% to 60% of the people he arrests exhibit an addiction and/or mental health issue. He said, expressing his personal view, “They don’t set out to be criminals. They’re just desperate people.”

While I was waiting for my car, I did a back-of-the-envelope calculation totaling the costs of having two police departments investigate this theft, the insurance costs (from the claims department to the monetary reimbursement), the towing company expense, the costs of jail lodging, court costs, etc. The amount would easily have covered almost a year of mental health services. I requested that the detective ask the judge to recommend mental health services, not strict jail time for the woman.

At a time when millions of people are at risk of being thrown off insurance, when we’re fighting for mental health parity, and when we’re trying to balance the national budget, you have to ask yourself, does it make sense to criminalize mental illness? I don’t think so. Fortunately, I’m not alone. I encourage you to check out an [effective model developed by Miami-Dade County Judge Steve Leifman](#). Because if you think the issue of mental health will never touch you, I hope you’ll think again. It might be your car next time.



Karen G. Foley
President & CEO



Mentors Lauren Minter and Jay Ortega with Mentees Kayla Hall and Sam Chavez

JPA Celebrates Mentoring Every Year, All Year Long

January is National Mentoring Month, but JPA's support and mentoring of young people and their families happen every month. Our founder Jane Addams was passionate about helping young people in dire circumstances instead of punishing or dismissing them. We're only in our 117th year, but mentoring's history goes back to The Odyssey, where Mentor guided Telemachus in the search for his father, Odysseus.

Guiding young men and women toward positive goals and behaviors, especially those from challenging backgrounds, supports their path to the future by sharing our knowledge, experience, and friendship. Its effects are long-lasting.

Through its mentoring program 9th Gear, for example, JPA helps eighth graders and their parents prepare for the transition to high school. You may remember your own transition: a new, bigger building, strange big kids all around, and teachers who may be, well, not as warm and sympathetic as your grade school teachers. Just learning the layout of your new school can be challenging, and making friends while keeping a full schedule can seem impossible. When you feel burdened by problems from home or the neighborhood, it may become even more difficult.

Erin Vanden Brook directs 9th Gear. During the summer between eighth and ninth grades, JPA and adult mentors have fun with kids while helping them learn ways to approach the new situations they'll face in high school. She says, "Every piece of JPA mentoring is designed through a clinical lens," making what happens doubly compelling for students, mentors, and parents, who are invited to participate in parent-oriented sessions.

9th Gear mentors provide the kind of positive energy that gives mentees the confidence to face their high school futures. At one meeting, for example, students pick the questions they most want to ask and have answered; they're in charge of how the session goes.

Students and mentors meet once a week, with a different theme for each meeting. It can be "Know yourself," or "Challenge yourself." Students and

There are

9 MILLION

at-risk youth without a mentor in America.

YOU can make a difference.

Become a mentor *In Real Life*

#MentoringMonth



#MentorIRL

mentors play “get to know you” games and have discussions about what it means to be from their neighborhoods. Each session starts with a meal and ends with mentors, mentees, and JPA leaders reflecting on what they’ve learned about themselves and each other. As the summer goes on, students get comfortable with these new friends as well as how to express their anxieties and get support.

Erin believes “having a positive and trusting relationship with mentors is key. We encourage ongoing communication even after a meeting.” She’s also aware of the cultural gulf that sometimes comes between mentors and students, with many mentors coming from backgrounds very different from their mentees’. “But we address the issues head-on,” she says, because it’s important for everyone to be open and honest about how they feel, and to listen to each other. “These are people,” she comments. “There’s a story; there’s a history.”

While students and mentors enjoy their activities, interested parents meet in a nearby space to discuss the issues coming up for their children. JPA connects with families one on one to start, then provides workshops about helping with the transition to high school, seeing things their children are experiencing through a parental lens, and perhaps most important, building relationships with other parents to support each other during the transition.

Erin and JPA see 9th Gear as a resource creating opportunities for support and a way to answer students’ critical questions. It’s not about telling anyone what to do or how to do it; it’s about hearing everyone’s experience, validating what’s going on in mentees’ lives, and helping them find their strengths without judgment.

If you’ve ever had committed mentors, you know how valuable they were to your own development as an individual or professional.

Mentoring can bring out the best in you and pave the way to a bright future. 9th Gear is one way JPA invests in that future for the young people we serve. We encourage everyone to experience the power of being a mentor, not just during January, but throughout the year.

If you’re interested in being a mentor to an 8th grader from Chicago’s West Side, contact [Erin Vanden Brook](#). You’ll be making permanent, positive change in a young person’s life. You can also find more information about mentoring at [MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#).

January is National Mentoring Month, but it isn’t just one month, it’s every month. **JPA**





Eric Rosen and future mentees

Mentors, Mentees, and Parents Reunite for Fun and Games

Saturday, January 13, current (and possible future) 9th Gear participants gathered in Shedd Park to renew their acquaintance and share pizza, games, and conversation.



Derrick, son Devin

Derrick Stephens and his son Devin participated with their mentor, Jason Stair. Derrick was pleased with his son's progress as a result of 9th Gear. "It helped him open up more. He's more

social and doing well in school this year," he said. "He used to be really quiet and self-contained, but he's evolving socially." One aspect that helped was getting closer to the other kids in the program.

Mom Cindy Chavez pointed proudly to her son Sam, who was playing Uno at another table. "Sam was having anxiety about the transition," she said. "Connecting with other kids going through the same thing was a great experience for him." She praised Sam's mentors, who shared their own experiences and were great role models. "Sam's a lot more confident now," she said, beaming.

Eric Rosen is a social worker in his daily life but volunteered to be a 9th Gear mentor. He enjoys it because "It's a great program that provides a safe space, fun activities, plus the opportunity to discuss social and emotional issues." He also found that other mentors had a passion for working with youth.

Interviewed separately, Jay Ortega mentions that his own personal struggles at that age informed his decision to be a 9th Gear mentor. He grew up in a middle-class neighborhood on Chicago's South Side but knew kids like those we serve at JPA. "As a minority myself," he says, he felt like he had the opportunity to be a

positive role model for young people who might be going through their own difficulties. “You feel compassion, but you also feel empathy; you try to put yourself in their shoes.”

After the intensive training, Jay was eager to meet his mentees. “I had a vision of what I thought it was going to be like. I thought I was hip and cool.” But he soon realized the complexity and importance of what he was doing. “During the first two sessions, I wasn’t as comfortable as I’d expected.

But then someone told a joke and people laughed. After that, it was a natural progression.” He and his mentees became more comfortable discussing issues like: What scares you right now? and What holds you back in certain situations? “We got to a point where we could open up to each other.”

During the summer Jay got to know his mentees Sam’s and Kyle’s moms as well. “They’re both really great people, very supportive of the program. They really wanted their kids to take something from what we were doing.” It was helpful that Jay had attended Sam’s high school; he was able to provide some inside information about coaches, since Sam was interested in playing football.



Sam Chavez and his mom

His experience has opened his eyes to the value of mentoring. He hadn’t thought about the impact poverty and single-parent situations can have on kids. “It opened my eyes to the actual impact [mentors] can have.” He says his perspective changed from sympathy to empathy, which emphasizes a real connection among people, something many young teens are missing today. “I’ll definitely be back. I think about it a lot. It changed my perspective on a lot of things. There’s real satisfaction in building a good relationship with a kid,” he says. It’s clear the power of mentoring works both ways. **JPA**





ASK Jane

Q: Dear Jane,

I've heard about JPA's 9th Gear Mentoring program from a student who went through it and liked it. I have an 8th grader who's shy and even a little fearful about being thrown in with older kids from different neighborhoods when it's time for 9th grade. What do you mean by "mentoring" and how would a mentoring experience in the summer before high school help my child?

A. Madre

A: Dear Ms. Madre,

"Mentoring" brings experienced, caring adults together with young men and women who need positive, friendly guidance to help them on the road to successful lives. Our 9th Gear mentoring program grew from recognizing that moving from middle school to high school is a critical time in a child's life and development — time deserving additional support and attention.

This transition is a significant change from the familiar to the unfamiliar, which can often cause anxiety and self-doubt. Students worry about harder high school work, whether they'll have

friends, whether they'll play on a team, or even whom they'll sit with at lunch. Having been the oldest as 8th graders, becoming lowly freshmen with lots of older kids around can be especially nerve-wracking. 9th Gear gives young teens space to express their feelings about this transition, showing them what to expect and how to deal with it while letting them know they're not alone.

9th Gear is an experiential, relationship-based program where teens connect with new peers and adults who come from similar and different backgrounds. Through weekly group activities and several field trips in the summer before 9th grade, young teens make friends from around the city and connect with caring adults who give them space to talk about topics that affect them. Each meeting is fun and active, although each serves a purpose; 9th Gear director Erin Vanden Brook says, "Every piece of JPA mentoring is designed through a clinical lens."

9th Gear is an experiential, relationship-based program where teens connect with new peers and adults who come from similar and different backgrounds.

Through thoughtfully planned activities and groupings with peers and mentors, as well as individualized support, 9th Gear builds capacity for the social-emotional challenges of high school. Activities help create confidence, encourage self-exploration, and give young people the feeling they can succeed in their new environment. Teens have the opportunity to process their feelings about going to high school and ask questions of former mentees/current high schoolers. In this safe space, they can explore their anxieties and get support.

We individualize the program, accepting each mentee where he or she is developmentally. Although we do meet as a whole for some activities, each mentor/mentee group has two mentors and only two or three mentees. This arrangement creates a setting where shy or fearful teens are better able to build confidence, develop relationships, and find their own voices. Encouraged to be open about their concerns for freshman year, they're often surprised to learn others have the same fears. Discussions can become animated and extremely helpful, with students themselves offering potential approaches as mentors guide from the sidelines. Coupled with games and other social activities, these weekly meetings become high points for our mentees.

Volunteer mentors are carefully chosen and trained by JPA professional staff to recognize and address the issues that may come up during meetings. These adults provide positive role modeling as well as careful non-judgmental guidance for their mentees. Our mentors report that

they derive great satisfaction from being part of 9th Gear.

Several of our weekly sessions also have separate meetings for parents who'd like to learn more about the transition from middle to high school. Parent workshops cover topics that occur during many of the group mentoring sessions, because not only is this a big transition for your teen, it's a big transition for you, too.

If you're interested in having your child participate in 9th Gear or in being a mentor, please contact [Erin Vanden Brook](#).

Most Sincerely,

Jane


JPA






NOTES and NEWS

January 2018



**Juvenile Protective
Association**
PRESENTS
**All in for Kids
Casino Night**
February 10th, 2018



Ticket Prices
\$125
\$150
At the door

Tickets include drinks, food, and dancing
Great Silent Auction items available!

Chicago Cultural Center:
78 East Washington Street
Katy Hinsdale
khinsdale@jpachicago.org
<http://donate.jpachicago.org/jpas-annual-spring-benefit-2018/>

Casino tables are for entertainment purposes only and are open to all.

2018 Casino Night

Show You're "All in for Kids with a night of casino games, cocktails, culinary delights, and dancing! Our 5th Annual event happens Saturday, February 10th, at the Chicago Cultural Center. Place your bets, drink, and dance under the Center's magnificent Tiffany glass dome. Proceeds from games, Silent Auction, and "Heads or Tails" benefit the Juvenile Protective Association, which supports vulnerable Chicago children through relationship-oriented therapeutic interventions. Last year's event sold out, so buy your tickets now at Early Bird prices. It's a gamble you can't lose! Find out more at <http://jpachicago.org/events/2018-Casino-Night>

JPA Team Publishes in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Research and Quality Improvement Specialist Akadia Kacha-Ochana, and her team published a report this month in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. After analyzing surveys of children and families, results showed that for those children who had been physically abused and had data on their injury, 42.6% were hurt to the point where they had a bruise, a bleeding cut, or a broken bone. Akadia has worked extensively with the CDC's National Center of Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, researching childhood victimization. Read more about the findings [here](#).

JPA's reach continues to grow:

Michelle Lansing, JPA's Director of Connect Programs, reports, "Through a partnership with [BPI \(Business and Professional People for the Public Interest\)](#), JPA is now providing consultation to PreK and Kinder teachers in six schools and additional group sessions for their 18 classrooms in Altgeld Gardens."

New Light:

JPA now offers counseling and therapy to all our neighbors in the Lincoln Park area. We see clients during the day on Mondays and Monday and Wednesday evenings.

We participate in Blue Cross/Blue Shield PPO of IL and can also take self-pay clients. Five experienced JPA therapists are part of New Light. For more information or to discuss an initial appointment, please contact [Jenna Kraft](#), LCSW, New Light Administrative Director at or 312-698-6933. You can also find details on our [website](#).

To learn more about JPA and find out how you can help us continue our work with vulnerable children and families, please contact Derrick Buckingham, Juvenile Protective Association, Chief Development Director, at 312-698-6937, derrickb@jpachicago.org or at 1707 North Halsted, Chicago IL 60614.