



Thinking about gifts this holiday season...

Lately I've been hearing from my former mentees who are now friends. When I first met them, they were just a few years older than the students we serve in our new mentoring program, [9th Gear](#). Today, they are consultants, lawyers, writers, doctors, musicians, marketers and nonprofit organizers bringing affordable housing to low-income residents or clean water to villages in Asia. All of them have back stories of struggle, challenge and triumph. They don't talk much about the difficult times in their lives – they are too busy helping others and changing the world. But, I know that life wasn't always easy for them.

I count myself blessed indeed to have these young professionals in my life – they are a gift. That's the thing about mentoring. At first, we think it's about helping the kids. But we quickly learn – and then relearn over and over again – it's really about how they enrich our lives and help us. From them I've learned how the health care system is evolving to provide cost effective and compassionate care to the elderly, how to construct a consulting proposal, and the latest on social media. I even got the inside scoop from my friend who was chronicling the story at Standing Rock. The “kids” are getting married and having children. Time flies. But what doesn't is the deep understanding that building relationships – sometimes with kids across generational or socio-economic divides – is a powerful way of building community.

I invite you to read about our 9th Gear community. I encourage you to check back for announcements about opportunities to support this program and mentor a great kid. I promise, it will be one of the greatest gifts you ever receive!

From our family to yours, happy holidays and Happy New Year!

Karen Foley