

## Time-tested role of mentoring gives inspiration

### Student-teacher model creates long-lasting gains

By Toby Chabon-Berger

It happened to a baseball manager, a public-relations expert, an elected official and a franchise CEO. What is it?

Their work and lives benefited from the help of a mentor. They now serve as mentors in their current positions, because they realize mentoring's value for creating new opportunities - and continuing the cycle.

Just ask Rob Rabenecker, manager of Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter. He attributes many of his career decisions and his operating style to Bill Stoneman, former manager of the Montreal Expos and the California Angels.

"Bill taught me that integrity and fiscal responsibility are the keys to operating in this business," said Rabenecker. "When I am confronted with a problem, I often think about how Bill would handle it. Without exception, his guidance still holds true today. He is my inspiration for keeping balance in my life. This business can consume you, and families are often the victims."

Rabenecker, who continues to serve a mentoring role, said that when you are in a leadership position, your advice to others must involve ethics, trust and honesty.

Mentors have a long-lasting effect on others. But they should never attempt to make protégés adopt roles that they are uncomfortable with or that challenge their value systems.

Palm City's Doreen Poreba began her public relations firm, the PR Czar, with the help of her mentor, Sue Twyford.

"Sue didn't just walk the talk, she was a role model," said Poreba. "A mentor is someone you respect in all facets. Sue taught me more than what could be expected from another professional. I also had a mentor when I first graduated from college who taught me that a career must have balance. Family and spirituality are necessary, and the vision of being a superwoman isn't realistic anymore."

Poreba also recalls being a mentor at SunFest when she worked with college students. One of her charges now works for the Discovery Channel. She feels a great sense of satisfaction knowing that she helped someone in their career.

As to advice for those seeking mentors, Poreba suggests that you make connections and build relationships with co-workers and by joining professional associations. Becoming active in civic and charitable organizations is a foolproof way to find mentors.

"You have to reach out to others who have the respect of many people and who demonstrate leadership," said Poreba. "They will be flattered that you consider them at the top of their field. You will have many mentors throughout your career, and, as you grow, the mentoring becomes reciprocal between you and other professionals."

Be ready to consider ideas outside the box, as well as traditional ones, if you find yourself in a mentoring relationship.

"I wouldn't be where I am if it hadn't been for mentors," said Priscilla Taylor, Port of Palm Beach commissioner and an independent Nationwide Insurance representative from West Palm Beach. "Mentors help you grow, and they remind you to never stop reaching for what you want from life. In both of my professional roles, I know it is important for me to respond to the needs

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of others so that they, too, can grow professionally, obtain greater skills and knowledge, and prepare for their future achievements."

Marcie Gorman, CEO of the Weight Watchers franchise from Boca Raton to Titusville, has been honored as one of the top 40 women business owners based on revenue. She credits the growth of her business to the concept of mentoring.

Many large organizations understand that formal mentoring programs make good business sense. At Weight Watchers, every staff member began as a program member. From there, the company's succession plan uses mentoring so that each person can advance to their greatest potential.

"Mentors can offer career-related activities to enhance skills, share life experiences that teach a lesson, give access to other leaders and provide up-to-date knowledge of emerging trends," said Gorman.

In recalling her many mentors, Gorman still relies on the advice of her high school English and theater teacher: "If you believe in yourself and know what you are talking about, you can conquer any fear that stands in your way."

Mentors can give you a boost whether you are beginning your career or climbing the steps to higher places. When you hook up with a person who has a high degree of knowledge and experience in their field, they can become your trusted advisor who will:

- Give you knowledge, insight and perspective
- Assist you in exploring new ideas
- Listen to problems
- Provide training
- Encourage appropriate risks
- Support your learning of new skills

The idea of mentoring comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. The King of Ithaca, about to leave for war, asks Mentor to teach his son about the role of being a king.

Throughout history, philosophers Socrates and Plato, composers Hayden and Beethoven, as well as psychiatrists Freud and Jung, all benefited from their trusted teacher-student relationships. In today's world, a mentor will give you wisdom and sensitivity that will provide you with a valuable legacy and a safe place to grow.

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