

How Mentoring for Leadership Has Impacted My Life An essay submitted by a 2017 Graduate

Mentoring for Leadership has positively impacted my life in ways that I never thought imaginable. Not only has MFL been beneficial to me during school, but in my personal life as well. This program was introduced to me in a way that was almost too coincidental.

I never really had a legit father figure for most of my life. After several multiple domestic violence incidents, he left me, my three siblings, and my mother to fend for ourselves when I was about 9 or 10 years old. My mother was forced to take care of me and three other siblings by herself. She raised me to be a gentleman I am today and she always told me, "You are my first born, and as my first born you have to be the role model for your younger siblings." I have heard that throughout my life. Whatever I do, they too will do.

Not only was I a role model for my siblings, I was forced to be the man of the house. So, as I grew older, I always kept the thought of "being more of a man than my father ever was" in my mind. Although I feel like I did a decent job of playing that role model/man of the house, there were times when I felt I needed guidance of my own. I needed more than my mother to guide me. I craved a legit father figure who could guide me through the future through their lens; to teach me what to do and not to do through a male perspective.

As a male, there are some obstacles you are going to face that you will have to learn to get through. I tried to teach my brothers that, but I didn't know how to because I never really experienced that myself. So, as I grew older, it was almost impossible to try and be that role model when I never really learned firsthand what that actually looked like. I would often lead my siblings in the wrong direction, or not help them in a time of need. I was almost replicating my father's behavior since that was what I had witnessed my whole life.

Not only was my behavior affecting my siblings but it was affecting me as well, both in school and at home. I felt like I was letting my family down because I wasn't being the role model my mother expected me to be. That's when Mentoring for Leadership came along...almost as if the Man above placed a gift before me.

I still remember it like it was yesterday. I was in band class and heard the announcement on the intercom for me to come to the Guidance Counselor's office. I wondered if I had gotten into trouble as most kids do. When I got there I saw a lady I didn't know sitting in a chair. She welcomed me and told me her name – Mrs. Kellogg. We talked about this "Mentoring for Leadership" program and how it was designed to pair you up with a mentor to guide you through life and help you with your future. I almost didn't believe it, because this was a gift from Heaven. I told her "Yes," I would like to be in the program and to this day, I still believe it was one of the smartest decisions I have made in my entire life.

I was paired with a mentor and he and I bonded immediately. Whenever we saw each other, I made sure to pick his brain for any knowledge on how to be a positive role model because he is the perfect man to look up to when it comes to that. He knows what being a male role model feels like and remains very active in his children's lives. I really needed someone like that in my life and, with him, I feel like I have what it takes to lead not only my siblings down the right path, but my future children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

In conclusion, I don't feel like MFL is just a "program." To me, it was a blessing in disguise. I don't know the path me and my siblings would have gone down if it wasn't for MFL. I would like to thank everyone involved in this phenomenal program – Mrs. Kellogg, Mr. Bill, Mrs. McAfee, Ms. Joy, Dr. Hibbs, and everyone else that helped me get to where I am today. It is MFL that has taught me how to be a role model, a future father figure, a productive citizen and has taught me key leadership skills that are needed to be successful in life. Now, although they may be quiet leadership skills, they are leadership skills nonetheless. If that isn't a major positive impact on my life, I don't know what is at this point.

Thank you, Mentoring for Leadership. Thank you!