

Time with mentor put me on a path to success



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This month, thousands of young kids and teens in Rochester are heading back to school. But these students can't go back

alone. They need the help of parents, teachers, mentors, grandparents and other positive adults to make it through.

Not long ago, I was one of those kids. And, like

most kids, I had a lot to say. In my youngest days, I expressed myself in any way I could — mostly

through guitar, writing and prayer. By age 15,

though, I quietly became frustrated, feeling pressured to adopt an adult role: to make choices and take actions that were beyond my responsibilities as a teen.

My frustration quickly turned into anger.

Listening carefully all the while was my teacher, who shared her concerns with my parents.

To learn more

To find out about mentoring programs supported by the United Way of Greater Rochester, go to www.uwrochester.org.

Shortly thereafter, I was enrolled in a mentoring program funded by United Way of Greater Rochester that helps kids

learn problem-solving skills through positive reinforcement.

Working with a mentor was an emotional experience, but I clearly needed someone to hear me, to hear what was on my mind and to help me work through it. The process gave me new perspectives and let me positively express how I was feeling.

Today, I am a successful student at Monroe Community College and I am taking the next step toward my life goals. I know this would not have been possible if not for the help of my family, teachers, mentors and this community. □

Johnson lives in Rochester.