



March 13, 2007

Each year I have the wonderful privilege of working with 33 volunteer mentors for the Kids Hope USA program. Their dedication to mentoring one child for one hour a week has made a difference in the lives of the children they touch as well as making an impact on the community in which they live.

Gene Thompson has been a mentor for six years for Kids Hope USA, beginning when he was working for General Motors Corporation and continuing into his retirement. This spring he will graduate his second Kids Hope USA student from our program. Kenny himself testifies in the DVD included in this packet to the influence Gene has had on his life, but his influence does not stop there. Kids Hope USA is about making a difference one life at a time. The incredible thing, though, is that in impacting that life, you have a ripple effect on so many others. As Kenny, a fifth grade student, spoke to a gathering of hundreds of directors from across the nation, he told how his mentor believes in him, takes him to basketball games and teaches him math. A Kids Hope USA director in the crowd penned these words the very next day to Gene, "Tears filled my eyes as Kenny spoke. Not only had you impacted Kenny's life, but mine too some 13 years ago as a child." She was attending the conference representing the program she leads in another town. If you were to attend a Coopersville basketball game you would in fact see many children that Gene has impacted through his quiet volunteerism as the kids gather around him and continue to sit with him at the games. This same director said to me that Gene is a "quiet man in the stands touching so many lives."

Gene would be the last to say he would be Coopersville's volunteer of the year, but as he changes lives, one at a time, our community will become a better place through his quiet volunteerism.

Cookie Speet
Kids Hope USA Director
Director of Children's Ministry

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