

**Retiree Reaps Beaucoup
Rewards from Mentoring**
By Dick Aft

For the past few months, my life has been enriched by a young United Way professional who selected my name from the Mentor Scout data base. Mentor Scout is a collaborative effort of the United Way Retirees Association and United Way Worldwide that has established a comprehensive system-wide online mentoring program.

Mentoring is not new to United Way. During my 50 years as a professional, now volunteer, this is the third organized program in which I have served as a mentor to a colleague with less experience. It's been the least that I could do considering all of the people who informally did the same for me over the years.

At its heart, mentoring involves torch-passing. . . . sharing the principles, practices, mores and methods of professional United Way practice. What sets the Mentor Scout program apart from its predecessors is its extensive use of online communication. It begins with online registration by people interested in serving as mentors. Following their acceptance into the program, each prospective mentor's bio is put onto a website open to United Way employees who are seeking one-year mentors through this program. Next, each prospective mentee reaches out to mentor candidates whose experiences appear to meet his/her interests.

My Mentor Scout mentee initiated our relationship by sending an e-mail self-introduction and inquiry regarding my interest. Following a brief exchange of e-correspondence to become acquainted, she followed Mentor Scout protocols by proposing goals and objectives for my reaction. Together, we refined them so that they fit her needs, my capacities to be of help to her and assurances that our plan fit within her job and supervisory job demands. After three months of mostly weekly, but sometimes twice-weekly e-mail exchanges, she and I both feel that she is making progress on her goals. Next, we plan a telephone conversation of share experiences related to her objectives.

What fun! And how interesting it is to be using a 21st century medium to "give back" some of the many things that have been given to me during my career. What's more is that, just between us, my mentee helps me feel proud and satisfied that I am adding value to her ability to contribute to our movement.

If you are interested in becoming part of the Mentor Scout program, please visit the UWRA website for a link to the information. Hopefully, you'll find this experience as delightful as I have!

*Dick Aft is a UWRA Board member. This article appeared in **UPDATES** Issue 1-2010.*