

Mentor Makes One-to-One Connection

At Bright Futures, the focus is often on the younger grade-school participants who benefit from the guidance and attentiveness the program provides. But the high-school students who serve as mentors and role models are crucial to our success, and worth celebrating for their selfless contributions to the community.

One mentor who stands out for her work is returning for a second year, and is continuing a special relationship she established last year with a mentee who has thrived in Bright Futures, despite difficult circumstances.

Emma Kendrick, 15, is a sophomore in Cody High School who is contemplating a career as a teacher after also considering psychology.

"I wanted to go into psychology for a little bit," Emma said. "But I don't think that I could do it. I think that it would affect me too much with how empathetic I can be." That empathy has served Emma well in her work as a mentor to Shawn Pearson, a sixth-grader with whom she connected last year in the Bright Futures After School program, which serves 20 younger kids.

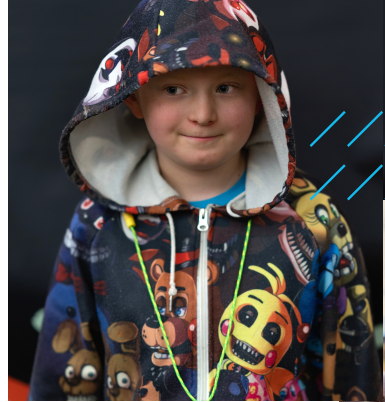
Shawn's mother died in an accident in 2018, when he was 6 and living in Kansas. He moved to Cody in 2020 with his father, who had family in town. Shawn joined Bright Futures and connected with Emma, which was a welcome source of support for him.

"He was always at my table, and he started opening up to me more and more," Emma recalls.

But in February of this year, Shawn suffered another tragic blow at age 10, when his father died from an unexpected health issue. He moved in with his aunt and uncle, and continued to participate in Bright Futures.

After missing a Bright Futures session right after his father's death, Shawn returned to the next one just a few weeks later, said Program Director Diane Ballard.

"It's a real testament to how comfortable he was at Bright Futures, being able to come and be with us," Ballard said.



Emma recalls that she "just felt so horrible for him, and I knew it was going to be such a hard thing for him to deal with. I decided to text Diane and see if I could do something to give him some extra support."

That's when Emma joined the One-to-One program, a Bright Futures initiative that matches mentors and mentees to spend time together over lunch.

The two began having lunch together a couple of times a month, with Emma visiting Shawn at school to sit and talk, listen or just spend time with him.

"I think just knowing that I'm there for him and I'm not judging, and I'm just there to listen to what he has to say and what he has to feel, that was really good for him," Emma said.

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Mentor Makes One-to-One Connection Cont'd

Eventually, their conversations turned toward happy memories of Shawn's time with his father, she said, "and it was really good to see that."

Shawn's aunt, Erin Hazel, said he values his relationship with Emma and his time in Bright Futures, with the two continuing their lunches for this school year. "Having those lunches has made him feel special and cared for when there's not a whole lot of adults besides me and my husband who can care for him," Erin said. "He really likes that."

And as is so often the case with many acts of giving, Emma said she gets a lot out of her work at Bright Futures.

"I just look forward to getting to spend time with these kids and see them grow and change throughout the year," she said. "I get to see how they take to heart the things that they learn, and they try to better themselves. As they get more comfortable, you get to see their actual personalities come out, and it's really fun."



INVEST IN A CODY CHILD'S FUTURE!

Bright Futures spends over \$1,000 for each mentee. We rely on local donors to sustain our important work. **Our goal for this campaign is to raise \$20,000.** Please invest in the opportunities Bright Futures delivers to our children by making a contribution.

Donate today at brightfuturesmentoring.com

YOUR SUPPORT PROVIDES

- Food – Feeding our kids is an integral way we show support.
- Craft Supplies – Creative activities are fundamental for engaging youth.
- T-Shirts – Participants feel connected and valued wearing their Bright Futures t-shirts.
- Operations – Managing our programs is a heavy lift and we are proud of our efficiency.

OUR PROGRAMS

Mentoring is proven to give kids the best possible chance for a healthy, successful future. Bright Futures offers free programs for Cody youth to reach their highest potential.

After School

Mentors join a dynamic group of 5th graders at the Park County Library twice a month for fun, enriching after school activities.

One-to-One

Each mentor is matched with a designated K-12 student for the school year. Mentors join these students at their schools once a month to spend time together over lunch.



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