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Kansas Mentors Announces Grant Opportunity *Funds will aid mentoring programs to ensure safe mentoring relationships*

TOPEKA, KS. – Kansas Mentors (KM) and Volunteer Kansas announced today an opportunity for mentoring programs to apply for funding to help offset the costs of background checks conducted through the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI).

In 2012-2013, Kansas Mentors was awarded \$100,000 from Volunteer Kansas to distribute funds to Kansas Mentors' Gold Star programs conducting KBI background checks on mentors. During 2014, Kansas Mentors will have \$34,500 in funding for Gold Star programs, because of another grant awarded by Volunteer Kansas.

“Kansas' mentoring programs are reporting significant declines in funding while an increase in the need for services,” Coach Bill Snyder, chair of Kansas Mentors said. “These funds are a strategic investment to ensure more young Kansans have access to a safe and caring adult role model.”

Background checks are an essential component of the screening process to help ensure the safety of youth involved in mentoring programs. The cost of criminal background checks, however, is substantial considering every mentor should complete and pass a check before they can begin mentoring. This can be a huge funding barrier that can potentially limit the number of young people a program serves or even worse, put youth in danger should a mentoring program forgo the background check because of the cost.

Nola Brown, director of Volunteer Kansas said, “The goal of Volunteer Kansas is to increase volunteerism across our state. Mentoring is one of the most important and rewarding ways to volunteer. With budget cuts to so many mentoring programs, our fear was children would miss out on opportunities for positive direction from qualified adults simply because reputable mentoring programs could no longer afford the necessary KBI background checks. We hope this grant will bridge the gap, encourage continued recruitment of volunteer mentors and ultimately result in positive life outcomes for kids in Kansas who are matched with caring mentors.”

Kansas Mentors is currently partnered with over 175 mentoring programs serving all 105 Kansas counties. The organization is committed to providing every young Kansan access to a caring and quality mentor through recruitment, awareness, and training efforts. Mentoring programs interested in applying for funding can visit Kansas Mentors at www.KansasMentors.org.

Volunteer Kansas, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) charity based in Wichita, Kan. Volunteerkansas.org is the organization's website devoted to increasing volunteerism in the state of Kansas and providing a hub for Kansans to find other Kansans who may need material or volunteer help.

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