

# Mentors, tutors do a world of good for our children



**Elisabeth Bocklet**

COLUMNIST

**R**ecently I watched the mayor of Newark talk about action in the midst of devastation. Newark has a reputation for violence, but even with that reputation a

terrible, senseless act of violence has shattered the hearts of so many people there.

Four young college students, all aspiring to great things, were gunned down execution style at a neighborhood park. One survived and a community is left to mourn, ask why, and as the mayor said, "... work together to ensure that it doesn't happen again."

He spoke of the need for renewed efforts among families, businesses, neighborhoods, schools and faith communities. He spoke of the need to surround our children with mentoring, tutoring and jobs.

As I watched the story, I thought about how numb we have become and how it seems to take horrific, unimaginable events to gain our attention. It is in that moment when we can choose to re-numb ourselves and avoid the pain that comes with awareness, or take action and transform ourselves and our community.

There are many worthy causes to join in our area. Building a home, sorting food and cleaning up our rivers are just a few of the many satisfying types of volunteer work. People like these experiences because there is a tangible result at the end of the day. But there are other experiences, like tutoring and mentoring, which are important but

## WANT TO HELP?

To join the efforts of the Asheville Buncombe Education Coalition, call 252-5936 or visit [www.abeducationcoalition.org](http://www.abeducationcoalition.org) and click on "How Can I Help."

don't always provide the volunteer with such immediate gratification.

As a volunteer, your efforts have the potential to transform a child's life. You might see improved behavior, test scores, attitudes and stronger self-esteem. But it could also mean that the results of your efforts won't be seen for years — and in the meantime the child still struggles and so do you, right along with them.

The Asheville-Buncombe Education Coalition knows first hand that those who choose mentoring or tutoring are a special breed. We know this because, with our member agencies, we coordinate these services for more than 390 public school children. We know this because each of those children is served by some of the most caring and determined people we've ever met.

When our tutors and mentors come to the office, they tell us stories. Sometimes they brag on their student's achievements and other times they are frustrated and need a pep talk. Sometimes they cry because the child succeeded beyond their wildest dreams and sometimes because they failed an important test.

We are proud of our tutors and mentors, but we need more of you to do this work.

Let's not wait for something terrible to happen locally before we wake up.

This is the opinion of Elisabeth Bocklet, marketing coordinator of the Asheville-Buncombe Education Coalition.