



ANNOUNCEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNIQUE YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM OFFERS EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITIES IN 5 BAY AREA COUNTIES

San Rafael, CA, December 28, 2007 – Leaders in Future Environments (LIFE Project), a program of Centerforce, is pleased to participate in National Mentoring Month (January 2008), a campaign spearheaded by the Harvard Mentoring Project of the Harvard School of Public Health, MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The campaign's goal "is to recruit volunteer mentors to help young people achieve their full potential. The campaign's theme is 'Share What You Know. Mentor a Child.'" **The LIFE Project is one of few programs in the San Francisco Bay Area specifically designed to meet the unique needs of children who are impacted by parental incarceration.**

The LIFE Project and the work of Centerforce, is extremely beneficial to Bay Area communities. Research has shown that programs that rely on volunteer mentors can play a powerful role in reducing drug abuse and violence, while greatly enhancing a young person's prospects for leading a productive life (Harvard Mentoring Project 2006). **Today in Alameda, Contra-Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties there are approximately 27,500 children of incarcerated parents, many of whom could benefit significantly from having a(n additional) caring and consistent adult in their lives.**

LIFE Project recruits mentors and youth only twice a year. **The program is unique because in addition to one-on-one mentoring, the staff, youth, and mentors form a collective supportive network, which they call the "LIFE Family."** All mentors and mentees come together regularly to visit a museum, take on a ropes course, go to a play, take a hike, have lunch, discuss various challenges in their lives and give each other support. Group activities are free for mentors and mentees and they focus on team building, self-esteem, peer and adult relationships, learning, and fun.

Both mentor and mentee benefit significantly from this program. "My mentor has helped me expand my horizons and also made me find out more about myself" – Mentee, 2005. "Being a mentor for the LIFE Project is personally fulfilling and creates a real sense of community for me and my mentee" – Mentor 2007. **In 2006 and 2007, two LIFE Project mentors were nationally recognized with "The Presidents Mentoring Initiative" Award given by the Family and Youth Services Bureau Administration – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.**

For more information on being a mentor, or mentee, contact the LIFE Project Coordinator, Sarah McKinnon at (415) 717-2770, LIFEProject@centerforce.org

LIFE Project Mission: Leaders in Future Environments (LIFE) Project is a mentoring program that aims to strengthen and promote leadership in youth affected by parental incarceration.

ABOUT CENTERFORCE

Centerforce is a 501(c)(3) with offices in San Rafael, Fresno, and San Quentin Village, California, and a visitors center just outside San Quentin State Prison. The Centerforce mission is to support, educate and advocate for individuals, families and communities impacted by incarceration.

Centerforce provides services for prisoners, ex-prisoners, and family members of prisoners through direct services, education, its annual Summit and through consultation and training for government agencies, community-based organizations and correctional facilities across the country and internationally. Throughout its history, Centerforce has worked to promote humane and effective services for prison visitors and prisoners. Located on the web at Centerforce.org.

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