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## Community celebrates ‘Thank Your Mentor Day’

Tim Forsberg



Warwick Beacon photos by Tim Forsberg

**PROGRAM HONORED:** Warwick Mentor Program coordinators Pamela Sherman and Nichole Lewis helped their program achieve “Premier” status.



In celebration of National Mentoring Month and “Thank Your Mentor Day,” roughly 100 community members and leaders gathered at Amica Mutual Insurance Company’s headquarters in Lincoln last week.

The VIP dinner event highlighted the work of the Warwick-based Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership (RIMP) and its vision of providing a mentor to every child who needs one in the Ocean State.

“I can tell you, from everything I know and the children’s stories I’ve heard, the Mentoring Partnership is an organization that changes kids’ lives,” said Robert DiMuccio, Amica’s chairman, president and CEO.

Shameem Awan, assistant vice president at Amica and vice chair of RIMP’s board of directors, served as the event’s emcee and has raised tens of thousands of dollars for the partnership through personal efforts such as completing half marathons and dancing fundraisers.

“Ultimately, what RIMP does is build relationships between children and caring adults that change both their lives for the better and gives hope for a more positive future for our

communities,” Awan said.

RIMP acts as an umbrella agency, networking with over 60 programs statewide. They provide assistance and resources to screen, train, recruit and match mentors with children. However, the call for more adult mentors in the state is strong.

“One in three young people will reach the age of 19 without the benefit of a mentor, so there’s still a great need,” said Tammy Tai, chief program officer at MENTOR, the national mentoring partnership with over 5,000 networked organizations. “[RIMP] is one of our strongest partnerships in our network, and [president and CEO] Jo-Ann [Schofield] actually chairs our national mentoring partnership advisory council. They’ve been just fabulous at leveraging national initiatives locally in Rhode Island.”

The accomplishments of the state’s mentoring programs drew the attention and praise of the state’s congressional representatives, who saw value in the services and dedication provided by mentors.

“I have mentors now and I’ve had mentors through most of my life. They have always provided me with good guidance and terrific wisdom,” U.S. Rep. David Cicilline said prior to the event. “There’s so much research that demonstrates that the presence of a caring adult in the life of a child can make a world of difference. I’m proud to support the Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership and really see it as a very effective way to enrich the lives of young people and be sure that they have an opportunity to realize their full potential.”

“We have all had mentors in our lives, myself included, who have had big impacts on who we are today and our career development,” U.S. Rep. Jim Langevin said. “You can never underestimate how important that support is to a young person. I’m a big supporter of the Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership and proud of the work that they do. I know that the impact they have on young people is significant.”

RIMP recognized and awarded those programs that had gone through their local quality mentoring systems, part of a national effort that focuses on improving and increasing the standards of mentoring. Programs reaching “Premier” status attended multiple workshops, streamlined processes and expanded professional development.



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The Warwick Mentor Program has nearly 300 mentoring pairs in all 22 of the city's schools. Run by Mentor Program coordinators Pamela Sherman and Nichole Lewis, the program again achieved "Premier" status this year.

Cindy Joaquin, assistant vice president at Centerville Bank, spoke of her mentoring experiences during the event. She met her fourth-grade mentee, Tamara, and after some initial hesitation formed a strong bond.

"When I became a mentor, it was to bring something positive to the child I would mentor," Joaquin said. "What actually happened is what that child did for me. I think I'm a better person because of becoming a mentor, and more importantly because of having Tamara and her family in my life."

Now in eighth grade, 14-year-old Tamara explained to the crowd the difference her mentor has made to her.

"I'm thankful for my mentor," she said. "Because of her, I've turned into a very good person. She's encouraged me to do well in school and in life."

For more information about RIMP, visit [www.mentorri.org](http://www.mentorri.org).



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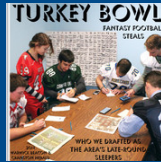
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