

Adopt A Class: A Priceless Experience for Paycor, Others

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Written by Rick Chouteau, Adopt A Class Board President

It began nine years ago, with a phone call from Adopt A Class Foundation founder Bill Burwinkel asking me to lunch.

I thought he wanted money, but this lunch was different; he asked that I talk to some of our Paycor employees to see if they'd be interested in sponsoring students at Oyler School during the holidays. Oyler is located in the city's Lower Price Hill neighborhood, and sponsorship meant writing pen-pal letters, buying gifts and hosting a holiday party for a classroom of students. More than 100 Paycor associates signed up, eagerly writing their letters and bringing their gifts to the classroom.

For most of us, it was the first time we'd walked through the big, steel doors of an inner-city school, and it was a little intimidating. As we celebrated Christmas and shared our gifts with the students, we were left with lasting impressions. One of our employees walked up to me in tears, sharing that her adoptee immediately rewrapped his gift explaining he wanted to "have something to open on Christmas." Others described how excited their adopted students were and how happy they were to be part of the event. I'm not sure who received the best gift, the student or our employees. As our CEO Bob Coughlin says, "You have to give to get."

But what affected me most was the number of Paycor employees who asked, "What else can we do?" This question triggered a chain reaction of involvement, with more than 35 people signing up to be weekly mentors at Oyler through The AI Hampton Mentoring Program. Several of those mentors saw an opportunity to get even more involved, with one mentor

introducing Oylar to the Greenacres Foundation in Indian Hill. Now, every student from kindergarten through eighth grade rides a bus to Greenacres, seemingly across the world from Lower Price Hill, for arts enrichment.

Other employees saw the high dropout rate of the Oylar High School students and started Steps for Success, a program now embedded in the school that provides high school juniors and seniors with career planning and experiences and also connects them with business community mentors. These mentors coach the students toward their personal goals, consistently touching base with them and guiding them along the way.

Steps for Success, now supported by another foundation, Hatmaker, has helped students go to college and find employment, proving that vision, a plan and mentorship can lead to personal achievement.

Thank you, Adopt A Class, for the introduction to a world upon which we can have a positive impact ... and that gives back to us.

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This article, underwritten by Rick Chouteau, Vice President of Sales for Paycor, is part of the Cincinnati Business Courier's inaugural [Cincinnati Stories edition](#). Readers are encouraged to [vote for their favorite story](#), including the one you just read here. Voting is open through December 31.

We may be biased, but we're voting for Adopt A Class!

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