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**Big Ten Conference Joins Coaches’ Mentoring Challenge**

***National Effort Supports Youth Mentoring***

(BOSTON, MA) – The Big Ten Conference is joining MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership and local nonprofit partners across the country to launch the [Coaches’ Mentoring Challenge](http://www.coachesmentoringchallenge.org/) – an effort to connect young people with caring adult mentors. Through this effort, Big Ten football coaches at the conference’s 14 universities will encourage fans to support the next generation of students and alumni by becoming a mentor to a young person.

“By connecting young people with caring adults we provide them with a powerful asset to achieve success in all aspects of their lives,” said David Shapiro, CEO and President of MENTOR. “Coaches are mentors both on and off the field and they are uniquely positioned to motivate fans to become mentors. We’re grateful for the commitment of those involved and the energy brought by the Big Ten support of this challenge.”

“This partnership is an exciting opportunity to make an impact on the young people in our communities,” said Big Ten Commissioner James E. Delany. “Our vast network of passionate alumni and fans can create both positive connections and impressions while mentoring the next generation of young fans.”

MENTOR’s report, [*The Mentoring Effect*](http://www.mentoring.org/mentoringeffect), found, through a nationally representative survey of young adults ages 18-21, that mentoring is linked to improved academic, social and economic prospects. As just one example, at-risk young adults surveyed who had a mentor while they were growing up were 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor. The report also found that one in three young people will grow up without having a mentor of any kind – either through a formal program or naturally through family friends or community ties.

The Coaches’ Mentoring Challenge is an annual campaign to connect more youth to mentors that began with Coach Tom Osborne at the University of Nebraska and Coach Bill Snyder at Kansas State in 2008. Within seven years, coaches from Big 12 and Big Ten schools have joined the challenge and in 2014 they rallied over 10,000 new volunteers.

All of the coaches are challenging fans to volunteer to mentor youth in their communities. Many of the coaches are also teamed up with MENTOR’s affiliate *Mentoring Partnerships* and other nonprofit partners.

The Coaches’ Mentoring Challenge kicks off on August 1st and runs through November 30, with final results released during the first week in December. Fans interested in becoming a mentor can visit [www.CoachesMentoringChallenge.org](http://www.CoachesMentoringChallenge.org) and search for a mentoring program in their community.

The TeamMates Mentoring Program was founded in 1991 by Tom and Nancy Osborne to provide support and encouragement to school aged youth. With a mission to positively impact the world by inspiring youth to reach their full potential, TeamMates is serving over 7,500 youth in 130 communities across Nebraska, Iowa, and California. To become a mentor go to [www.teammates.org](http://www.teammates.org) or call 1-877-531-8326.

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