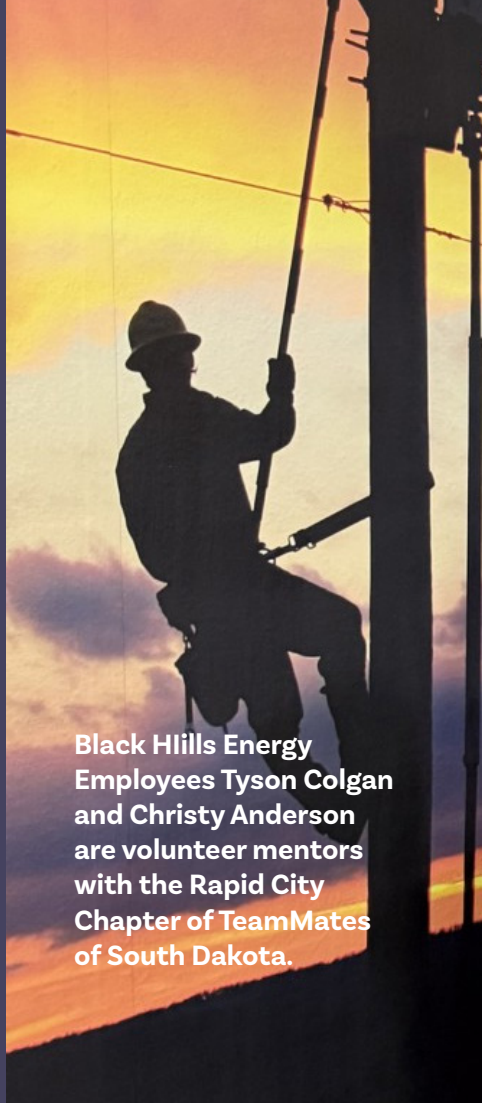
Mentoring MOTIVATION

Technology can automate tasks, analyze data, and streamline workflows, but the team at Black Hills Energy will tell you it cannot replace the power of human connection.



Black HIills Energy Employees Tyson Colgan and Christy Anderson are volunteer mentors with the Rapid City Chapter of TeamMates of South Dakota.

The multi-state energy company is realizing positive employee outcomes from relatively small investments in personal relationships.

The company's Rapid City headquarters has more than a dozen employees serving as TeamMates mentors. The school-based mentoring program matches student mentees with adults mentors. During the school year, the matches meet weekly, on school grounds, for about an hour to play games, do puzzles, and share common interests.

Now some businesses might be hesitant to allow employees to mentor off-site during the workday, but Black Hills Energy has a different philosophy.

"I would encourage employers to view mentoring as an investment rather than a time commitment that takes employees away from their work," said Christy Anderson, Credit and Collections Supervisor at Black Hills Energy. "When employees feel supported and have opportunities to contribute to others' growth, engagement and job satisfaction tend to increase."

This is something Anderson understands firsthand. Not only has she been a TeamMates mentor for four years, she also supervises employees who volunteer with the program. Tyson Colgan, Senior Credit & Collections Specialist, is one of them.

"I agree! I always feel extra motivated on my mentoring days," smiled Colgan. "It gives me something to look forward to during the week, and I always enjoy the feeling of helping my mentee."

Anderson and Colgan aren't anomalies. National



(right) Katie Fleming, Black Hills Energy Vice President of Customer Experience, meets with her TeamMates student mentee weekly during the school year.



TECHNOLOGY & LONELINESS

The lack of social connection poses a significant risk for individual health and longevity. Poor or insufficient social connection is associated with increased risk of disease, including a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.

-2023 U.S. Surgeon General's report: Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation

statistics from the TeamMates organization consistently show those who mentor are more emotionally committed at work. A survey of TeamMates mentors from the 2024-2025 school year tells us 85% of mentors feel more engaged at the office (and at home) after meeting with their students.

"Two of my employees stepped up to become mentors outside of their day-to-day responsibilities, and I've seen significant growth in both of them as a result," shared Anderson. "Their involvement in mentoring has strengthened their leadership, listening, and engagement skills within our organization."

"My favorite memory is the first time my mentee started asking me questions about my life, I could tell he was starting to open up, and it just felt really great," explained Colgan.

Jess Karim, TeamMates of South Dakota State Director, has heard similar sentiments many times from TeamMates volunteer mentors.

"People feel better, are more hopeful, more satisfied, and more motivated when they connect with other people in meaningful ways," she said. "Mentoring provides that connection for both the mentor and the mentee; and the employers see a very real and positive byproduct as a result."

As employers search for new ways to improve productivity and retention, Black Hills Energy may have found an answer. By investing in their employees outside their workplace, the company is strengthening engagement inside it.

TeamMates Mentoring currently has eight chapters in South Dakota serving students in grades 3 through 12. To learn how you or your business can be involved, visit teammates.org or contact Jess Karim at jkarim@teammates.org.