

The Martin Pollak Project

Building Families and Strengthening Communities



Treatment Foster Care — Independent Living — Project Northstar Mentoring & Tutoring — DC & Baltimore Tutoring & Mentoring Initiatives

Since its founding in 1980 as a foster care program, MPP has been dedicated to providing individualized, stable and nurturing care to young people. We have focused on serving foster children and youth with the most intensive needs and challenging life circumstances, kids who have often been abused and whose parents may have struggled with substance abuse problems.

In 2009, MPP assumed responsibility for **Project Northstar**, a 25-year-old tutoring and mentoring program based in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, DC and serving 150 kids each year.



Our Vision: Every child is born with certain rights. At the very least, each child has the right to be loved, clothed and sheltered in a natural environment. To grow up truly human and fully alive, all children need a family and a community to call their own.

In 2015, we took on a much greater challenge: To do our part to build the next Civil Rights Movement — a movement of individuals and organizations that will transform education outcomes in DC and Baltimore by creating a public campaign to get a tutor, mentor or “navigator” for every young person reading below grade or with other academic or non-academic needs in DC and Baltimore.

Get Involved in DC or Baltimore!

We can transform the lives of individual kids and create a civic culture where everyone takes more responsibility for one another and the community as a whole. But we truly need your help. We need:

- Foster parents for our Foster Care program
 - Volunteer tutor-mentors, substitute tutors, and site coordinators in DC and Baltimore for Project Northstar
 - Social work staff for our Foster Care and Independent Living programs
 - Interns and Civic Leadership Fellows (see our website for details)
 - Sponsors for Northstar, foster care and TMI to help support our work
- It costs us nearly \$1,000 per year per student (typical for the field) to support the Northstar (and much more for foster care). Your support helps cover volunteer coordination, training & regular check-ins, criminal background checks, reading and math assessments 3 times a year, individualized learning plans, coordinating mentoring activities & holiday events, working with parents and students who are having difficulties or who have special needs, working with local food organizations to get students healthy meals at evening tutoring sessions, and recruiting new volunteers and students.

Services for Kids in Foster Care

Our largest program is **Therapeutic Foster Care**. We recruit and train foster parents and match them to kids who need the intensive community-based program that we provide. Our case managers, almost all who have Master's Degrees in Social Work, are in contact with each family on at least a biweekly basis. Most of our young people work with therapists, receive special tutoring, work with a mentor, and receive a range of other services.

The **Young Adult's Initiative Independent Living Program (YAI)** is an individualized, apartment-based, community-oriented youth development program that →

Project Northstar Mentoring & Tutoring

Project Northstar was started 25 years ago in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, DC and serves more than 150 students each year. In January 2016, we will launch Project Northstar Baltimore.

Each Northstar student is teamed up with a volunteer tutor-mentor, who works with the student for the full academic year — and often for many years. When a student starts the program, he or she gets individualized reading and math assessments to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness so the tutor can help the student make fast progress! →

Tutoring & Mentoring Initiative: District of Columbia & Baltimore

More than half of all students in DC schools (40,000+) and more than 4 out of 5 (64,000+) in Baltimore are reading below grade level and many more have other academic and non-academic needs. We know from decades of research that tutoring and mentoring work. We are working in partnership with other tutoring and mentoring organizations (30 in DC), schools, universities, businesses and civic leaders to create a public campaign, the next social movement, to get the volunteers and support needed so that tutoring & mentoring programs like Northstar can be expanded to serve all the kids who need help. →

Foster Care & Independent Living (continued)

works with young men and women between the ages of 16 and 21 who are leaving foster care. YAI provides housing, support services and a safe haven that empowers and encourages these young women and men to become self-sufficient as they finish their schooling, develop their career path, enter the workforce and gain the life skills needed to live on their own.

Caring people —loving and stable foster homes, energetic social workers, compassionate therapists and inspiring volunteer tutors — are at the heart of our work. Our objective is to give kids the relationships, services and support they need to reach their potential and succeed in their schools, communities and in the world of work.

Most of our foster kids are teenagers and most come from Baltimore City. They range in age from seven to twenty-one. Some are on their

way to college but many struggle to read and do math at a basic level. Few have had many successes in their lives. But we strive to change that.

Foster parents come from all walks of life. Some are new parents; others have children already in their home; still others may be grandparents. Most of our parents take in one child but some may take in one or more brothers and sisters, too. Our foster parent trainers and support team help new foster parents get the training they need to work with kids who may have been through some very difficult experiences from a young age. Foster parents are part of the "treatment team," working with a young person's case manager, therapist (many but not all of our young people meet with therapists on a regular basis), and advocate/mentor to make sure that we are coordinating services and experiences.

Project Northstar Tutoring & Mentoring (continued)

Tutoring sessions take place every Monday and Thursday evening from 6:00-7:30 pm at Southeast Anchor Branch Library in Highlandtown (Baltimore) and every Tuesday and Wednesday at the Latin American Youth Center building in Columbia Heights (DC). During the 90 minute sessions, students work with their volunteers to complete their homework, and study for upcoming tests and quizzes. Students will also be provided with extra help – based on their individual math and reading needs - for days when they do not have homework.

After the student/tutor pairs have worked together for a few weeks,

they will begin to participate in mentoring activities. These outings are planned by the volunteer and student/parent and can range from going to the movies or visiting a museum, to attending sporting events or meeting up for extra tutoring sessions.

Project Northstar is accepting applications for Baltimore and DC students in grades K-12. Students will be matched with their own volunteer who they work with for the duration of the year (and subsequent years if both continue with the program) by participating in both tutoring and mentoring activities.

DC & Baltimore Tutoring & Mentoring Initiatives (continued)

In the longer term, our goal is to create a civic culture in DC and Baltimore where all people take more responsibility for one another and for the community as a whole, regardless of whether you live in the city or the suburbs, a struggling neighborhood or a thriving one. And we are talking with others in cities around the country about implementing a similar approach in their cities. We believe the time is ripe for an approach like this that builds on Americans desire to make a constructive difference in their communities and get past

the negativity and us-vs-them mentality that crowds out the sustained collective action that we need today if we are to have flourishing communities tomorrow. As they saying goes, *It will take a village!*

Two Mutually Reinforcing Goals



MPP: Our History and Goals

Elizabeth Hall Pollak (1917 - 2014) was raised poor on a farm outside of Annapolis. Her family had little money but they were a strong family and community. She was a person of modest means who lived simply and believed that we all have a responsibility to help those in need -- especially children -- and that we could create the "beloved community" that Martin Luther King spoke of.

With help from members of St. Lukes, her small Episcopalian church in Annapolis, and inspired by both her faith and her volunteer experience working with a young man in the county detention center, she founded the Martin Pollak Project in honor of her husband who had died of a heart attack at a young age and who also believed that we have moral responsibilities be-

yond ourselves. Using her own funds, she hired an executive director and drafted other volunteers to serve with her on the board.

Today, we are doing our best to carry on her "civic faith," the belief that we can appeal to "the better angels of our nature," as Lincoln put it, and make a better world by working together with love, patience and wisdom. We are committed to not only serving the kids in our direct care and working with the volunteer tutors and mentors that serve in DC and Baltimore but to building civic partnerships to get a tutor, mentor or "navigator" for every student in DC and Baltimore reading below grade level or with other academic or non-academic needs, and in the process create a civic culture that can help us realize our deeper aspirations for a flourishing and caring community that works for all people.

For more information or to volunteer, contact us at info@mppi.org, <http://www.mppi.org> or (410) 685-2525 or 202-340-6438 — 3701 Eastern Ave., Baltimore, MD 21224