

## State Library Staff Member Participates in Kansas MASTER Program for Mentoring

by Janie Rutherford, Communications Specialist

How does a full-time working mom with a 10-month-old fit one more weekly appointment into her busy schedule? She does it by becoming a mentor in Kansas Mentors Gold Star Program, a new program that allows state employees to volunteer up to 90 minutes per pay period to an approved organization.



Lenita Givens, Readers Advisor for Talking Books in Emporia, said she knew this was a perfect opportunity for her.

"I knew I wanted to do something. I remembered how in a previous job, the manager would mentor after lunch every Tuesday," she explained. "I thought mentoring a student would be a lot of fun, but felt I was unable to participate because the open hours of the school coincided with the hours I worked."

Governor Kathleen Sebelius announced the Kansas Mentors Gold Star Program in mid-August, and by September 16, Givens was at Lowther North Intermediate School mentoring a sixth grader in reading. She mentors through the MASTER Program (Mentors And Students Together Embracing Reading).



"I learned of the MASTER program at just the right time. I wanted to do something to make a difference, and promoting reading is what I like," she said. Givens and the student take turns reading aloud, with Givens listening so she can help with pacing and word pronunciation. Story comprehension is an important goal as well. Givens' commitment for this semester ends Dec. 2; however, she intends to continue the mentoring next semester.

The goals of the MASTER Program are:

- to help the student develop a genuine interest in reading
- to assist the student in reaching his/her individual reading goals

- to elevate the student's instructional reading level
- to promote self-confidence and academic success; and to provide positive adult influence and interaction.

Lowther North has 104 students in the mentoring program.

"If the student doesn't know a word, we look it up in the dictionary, and we keep a sheet for new words. We follow up with a quiz on the use and meaning during the next session," Lenita explained.

Kansas is one of only eight states that allow full-time employees to use work time for mentoring. Mentoring is described as a "consistent, structured, stable relationship between youth and caring role models. This relationship should involve regular, ongoing meetings that focus on developing character, capabilities and confidence of the young person," according to the media release from the Governor's office.

The Kansas Mentors Gold Star Program office indicated that there has been a lot of interest in the program, although they don't have a count on how many state employees are participating. Ella Todd explained that some employees already had a mentoring date scheduled during their lunch hour and didn't change their effort to one that is reflected on their agency's time sheets. She is working on a way to get a clear count on participation.