

Wayne and Troy's stories show how 'IAM4Kids' changes lives

The IAM4Kids program has proven to be a life-saving ministry for many Lawrence County students. It is a not-for-profit initiative that is not about religion but about the kids who are being served. It's about those kids having a stable adult in their lives with a good set of ears, to provide a sounding board so they can learn to live as productive citizens.

Theresa Beck is the current President of IAM4Kids with Steve Seaton serving as Vice-President. They work along with several mentors throughout Lawrence County. The program strives to achieve two things: prove to the kids that they can trust adults, then teach them the importance of self-image and perspective so they can discover their gifts and purpose in life.

Students are referred to IAM4Kids through truancy, disciplinary hearings, or counselors. Lawrence County student Wayne Price has been part of IAM4Kids since 8th grade and thanks the program for helping him survive his adolescent years. As a juvenile constantly in the court system with numerous counts of assault, on the verge of being "shipped off," Wayne believes God sent the IAM4Kids program and mentor Steve Seaton to save his life. "The best way to describe the impact the program and Steve have had on my life is the fact that IAM4Kids brought Steve into my life and I would not be here if not for him," Wayne said. "I have never known my father and Steve treats me like his son." Wayne's hope for the program is to see more kids like him be helped out of the sad valleys that so many kids find themselves in.

When asked what makes an effective mentor Wayne states, "A true mentor has the ability to really listen, is open to people, and is non-judgmental. Mentors must be very passionate about their job and it has to be a calling from God."

Before the program Wayne would find himself in court at least one day a week. He was mad at the world for never knowing his dad and yearned for someone to listen. He shares, "I never thought I had a future and when I met Steve I realized that I do have a future and that God's got a plan for me." Currently, Wayne is a senior at Lawrence County High School and enjoys classes like Plumbing/Electrical and sees that later in life he could fall back on the skills he has learned. He also works part-time at Square Forty restaurant. He has already enlisted in the Marine Corps, where he will spend the next four years of his life after graduation.

Wayne is very excited about giving back to the program that has saved his life. "The only thing that has been asked of me is to mentor beyond...not just take the knowledge and keep it, but to spread it. I am currently mentoring Jonathan, a student at Ingram Sowell and I hope to do for him what Steve did for me.... give him a chance."

Troy Box, an amazingly driven young man, found himself living in a home

with no electricity, no water, and no food when he met his IAM4Kids mentor, Anthony Potts. He had previously been living in a home with nine children, survived being abused, lived in foster homes, was adopted twice, and in the custody of the state twice. At a truancy hearing he was matched up with his mentor through IAM4Kids and as a result his life was saved and purpose was found.

Currently Troy is a student at Lawrence County's adult high school where he will graduate in December. While attending school he is working as a computer technician for the Lawrence County Board of Education, part-time at the Mustang Café, and is also running a side business out of his home, working on computers. Troy plans to attend Columbia State Community College beginning in January, majoring in Computer Science.

When asked about hopes for the IAM4Kids program Troy shares, "I hope someday for the program to be

able to provide a shelter for children who are kicked out of their homes at 18. Many kids I know, once they turn 18 their parents kick them out to live on their own." Troy said he would also like to give back to the program that has done so much for him.

At the moment IAM4Kids is in need of more staff because there are many children just like Troy who need a caring, consistent adult in their lives. When asked to describe the perfect mentor Troy says, "The perfect mentor is someone that respects the kid he or she is matched with, someone who is always honest and most importantly a good listener."

IAM4Kids has eight mentors that are matched up with kids in the Lawrence County School System. The matches start in the lunchrooms of the schools. "The most productive place to bring a child is to a dinner table," said Seaton. "Kids get to communicate and share about their lives while finding a positive adult to

emulate." A mentor commits for one year and maintains a consistent relationship with their match, so they will not be just one more adult who has appeared, then disappeared from their lives. The goal for IAM4Kids is to have 200 matches in the schools. "When adolescents develop close connections with mentors, their ability to connect with other adults, especially their parents, also improves," Seaton said.

IAM4Kids is always looking for grants or any means of funding. Mentors bring food once a week for students and are always willing to help students out in any way he or she can. An account is set up at First Farmers & Merchants Bank for anyone wishing to contribute to this life-changing program. If you are interested in becoming a mentor and getting involved please contact Steve Seaton, Vice President of IAM4Kids. His email is steveseaton@att.net and cell phone is 931-244-0945.

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Sam Dorning
*Lauryn Dunkin
*Jackson Gulley
*Allie Kate Kidd
Abigail Kidd
*Nate Patterson
Dylan Piovarcy
*Ella Rohling
Mary Catherine Rohling
*Abbey Royse
*Dawson Adams
Alex Inman
Madison Martin
*Diana Moss
*Ellie Rosson
Jeffery Watson
Jaxon White
Brianna Cannon
Jacob Cox
Alizabith Fronning-Rice
Mari Holder
Oliver Hunt
*Tristen McBee
Dante Romer
Hutson Stutts
*Megan Travis

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Daniel Belew
*Sara Brown
*Sydney Carr
Bronson Clanton
*Jeremy Cobb
Bailey Coker
*Logan Coleman

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*Hayes McNutt
Elizabeth Prentice
*Emma Sisk
Micki Blade
*Briar Bonee
Brooke Brewer
Jerika Fox
*Bailey Hagan
*Jacob Haney
Cameron Huson
Taylen Lance
Layla Murks
Perry Russ
Alyssa Taylor
Kaleb Williams
Kara Wimbs
Annabelle Barnes
Holley Cullum
Caitlin Estes
*Peyton Fralix
Austin Hanson

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*Andrew Heath
*Cheyenne Johnson
*Jenna Jones
Caleb Kiddy
McKenna Romer
Madison Weathers
*Ashley Attkisson
*Jett Beasley

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Dustin Gage
Kyra Goode
*Kayleigh Johnson
*Neely Jones
Kassie Longshore
Trent McNabb
Cody Moss
JR Murks
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*Riley Calvert
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Malori Dorning
Callie Fisher
Anna Garretson
*Ty Hagan
*Colin Hunt
*Jake Martin
Christopher Messer

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*Adam Newton
*Craig Nix
*Hunter Smith
*Emma Willis
*Eoin Broadfoot
*Anna Fisher
*Lauren Gage
Ian Gulley
Paul Morrow
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*MacKenzie Owens
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