

Guiding youth to greatness

Chicago, IL

Lisa, a 17-year-old from a Chicago neighborhood with high rates of crime, poverty and low academic achievement, is determined to make a difference and not follow the bleak path that many of her peers have chosen. Yearning to be the role model she never had, Lisa strives to enhance herself and her community and is committed to being the first person in her family to graduate from college.

Studies show minority students, like Lisa, from struggling communities cite finances, inadequate academic preparation and juggling school and work as the major reasons for skipping college. Far too many of these young people never even graduate high school. Research shows

that **high school dropouts are 72% more likely to be unemployed than those who graduate, yet nearly 50% of Chicago students do not graduate.** Sadly, **71% of Chicago's youth that do graduate are considered minimally prepared academically for college.** Communities nationwide are facing similar issues with high school dropout rates and educational shortfalls and United Ways across the country are working to change this.



United Way of Metropolitan Chicago works to provide youth in their communities with the support and resources to overcome educational challenges and ensure their success. United Way and its community partners offer programs that aim for every young person to have a safe and healthy environment in which to learn, grow and succeed. United Way of Metropolitan Chicago focuses on mentoring and stay-in-school programs to keep youth on track for graduation and prepare them for the future.

Thanks to the community's generosity, United Way was able to support a youth mentoring program where Lisa received the personal support and guidance to make her goals a reality. "Without the Boys & Girls Club in my neighborhood, I would have followed a different path," admits Lisa. **As the first person in her family to be accepted to a four-year university, Lisa is already beating the odds.** Regardless of the challenges that lie ahead, Lisa will not be discouraged. "I'm not giving up now," she promises. Lisa's success is not an isolated occurrence. **Seventy-five percent of youth that attend after-school development programs similar to Lisa's reach their goals and graduate from high school.**

Your investment in United Way brings lasting changes in the lives of young people like Lisa, and builds stronger communities for us all. That's United Way. That's what matters.

- Young people who have had a mentor are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs; 27% less likely to begin using alcohol; 53% less likely to skip school and 33% less likely to engage in violence.
- 75% percent of youth that attend after-school development programs similar to Lisa's reach their goals and graduate from high school.
- High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested.