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Writer/Reporter dedicated to amplifying the voices of women and girls

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Have You Ever Thought About Mentoring?

January is National Mentoring Month, with January 25 marking "Thank Your Mentor Day."

According to the Harvard School of Public Health, 15 million young people in the United States are in need of a mentor.

Have you ever thought about mentoring? You've probably heard that mentor programs help decrease youth violence, lessen drug abuse, reduce the high school dropout rate, and help send thousands of young people to college each year. This evidence alone could be what motivates you to call up your local nonprofit today and sign up as a mentor. However, for those of you still sitting on the fence, you may want to know that mentoring not only helps a young person advance in their life, but it also helps you.

## WriteGirl

A mentoring program for teen girls in Los Angeles that I have been inspired by is called WriteGirl. This nonprofit pairs professional women writers -- from songwriters, to playwrights, to journalists, to executives in corporate communications -- with teen girls to explore the power of writing. "When you hear what comes from the pen of a 15-year-old, it inspires your own writing," said Susanne Ferrull, a former journalist and current public relations professional, who has been a WriteGirl mentor for eight years.



I first learned about WriteGirl last October at Maria Shriver's Women's Conference when WriteGirl was awarded a Medal for Service as the 2010-2011 California Nonprofit of the Year. At the conference I met Ali, an 18-year-old WriteGirl graduate, who told me that her mentorship helped her not just in English classes, but helped her articulate her ideas in math and science classes. "It helped me take writing and make something so simple as math interesting, and fun, and poetic," she told me.

When I spoke with Keren Taylor, executive director of WriteGirl, she told me that when she first met Ali, Ali was really shy. This is clearly not the case now. "To see her be so incredibly articulate five years later, that's what gets me up every morning -- to see what WriteGirl does for young women," said Keren.