

TeamMates celebrates 10 years in Gothenburg

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Former Husker: One hour a week makes a difference.

Aaron Davis knows first hand what kind of a difference being a mentor can make.

He also understands that mentoring isn't a one-way street.

The former University of Nebraska football player and motivational speaker shared with a clubhouse full of local mentors and mentees his personal experiences as a member of the TeamMates program during the Gothenburg chapter's 10-year anniversary celebration Friday night at Wild Horse Golf Club.

Davis is a self-proclaimed bench warmer from the 1994 national championship Husker team.



"If you have even heard of me before, you are a sick Husker fan and you need help," he joked.

Davis is a nationally-known motivational speaker and author as well as a long-time mentor in the TeamMates program which was developed in 1991 by former Husker coach Tom Osborne with his wife, Nancy.

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“Most of us just want to be listened to,” Davis told the crowd. “Think about how your lives might be different if you’d only listened more.”

Davis pointed one directive toward the young people.

“When you’re with your mentors, listen to them,” he said. “They’ve lived a little longer and experienced a lot more.”

He also encouraged students to never stop dreaming.

“I grew up about four miles from Memorial Stadium,” he said. “We’d be playing in the back yard on game day and every time Nebraska would score, we could hear the noise.”

That sparked a dream inside Davis to one day wear the white pants, red jersey and white helmet.

“I had a dream that I would run out of that tunnel one day,” he said. “I was a bench warmer, not a super star, but I had a dream and I accomplished that dream. Don’t stop dreaming.”

But the instructions weren’t just for the youngsters in the audience.

Davis had meaningful advice for the adults also.

He said a teenager at one of his presentations in Seattle, WA, said it best. The teen told him the problem with adults is they don’t listen.

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“Sometimes the best thing to do is to have a seat, say, ‘How was your day?’ and then just listen,” Davis told mentors. “We don’t do that often enough.”

The rewards, he said, can be surprising.

Davis told adults there are three numbers he hopes they’ll remember:

49% of students across the nation matched with a mentor improved their academic performance.

80% of those matched with a mentor reduce the number of problem referrals at school.

89% of students in a mentoring program improve their school attendance.

“Those are big numbers and it only takes an investment of an hour of your a week,” Davis said. “Be part of the solution.”

Davis provided the keynote address at the “Perfect 10” celebration of success for the Gothenburg TeamMates program.

Local TeamMates coordinator Lindsey Tederman said 35 adult mentors will be needed in Gothenburg for the coming school year with new volunteers accepted all the time.

“It’s the people who make this thing work,” she said.

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Tederman gave special recognition to Adrian Fiala, who hosts the annual Husker Heritage Golf Tournament to benefit the state and local TeamMates groups.

Tederman said his fund-raising efforts have provided 60% of the local chapter's operating budget.

Fiala, former color commentator and Cornhusker football historian, said the charity golf event at Wild Horse was begun as a way to give back to western Nebraska fans.

At the same time, people come to support the TeamMates cause.

"We're going to continue this thing as long as the good Lord lets me and as long as there is a TeamMates program to support," Fiala said.