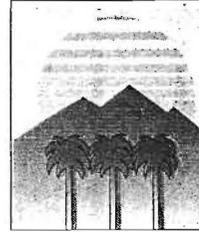


**SUNDAY**

**June 29, 1997**

The



SAN BERNARDINO  
COUNTY  
Sun

## Want to help save a youngster at risk? Be a mentor

**W**ith the national high school drop-out rate rising sharply, we have a tough issue to deal with in our society. In a recent NBC news poll, the majority of those surveyed said young Americans without job prospects pose a bigger threat to the United States than any foreign enemy.

Mentoring is one solution. The battle plan is to get public and private sectors alike to volunteer their time to help our young people. Colin Powell is calling the program "America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth."

According to Newsweek, there are approximately 15 mil-

**Marie  
Hayashi  
Reichelt**



**CORPORATE  
PERSPECTIVE**

lion young people who are at risk — children from poor, often dysfunctional homes. Half of them overcome the odds to become productive members of our society. The other half are

questionable. Every youth who takes the wrong turn ends up costing society a million dollars throughout his or her lifetime in correctional and emergency treatment.

Crime may be down, but juvenile crime is way up. Newsweek reports that more than half a million teens belong to gangs. Teen suicide rates have doubled. Teen pregnancy is up nearly 25 percent. These grim statistics suggest we may have to struggle to compete in the global economy.

The good news is that mentoring works. Volunteerism has been around for a long time.

Many Fortune 500 companies are deploying volunteers into communities through education, funding youth programs and creating jobs for young people.

At least one local company sponsors Charity Day each year where employees work on one Saturday. Combined with company matching funds, the money they earn is donated to a needy community organization.

There are many local community organizations that could benefit from mentoring programs such as child abuse prevention, teen suicide intervention and support for latch key

kids. Some companies have an adopt-a-school program where students are invited to the company for tours and other activities. Big Brother/Big Sister programs utilize mentoring programs quite successfully.

Seek out mentoring opportunities in your neighborhood. Can we inspire fellow Americans to remain accountable for the future of our children? Accept the challenge. Be a mentor.

**Marie Hayashi Reichelt is a management consultant and author. This column appears occasionally in The Sun. Send questions to Corporate Perspective, Business Section, The Sun, 399 N. D St., San Bernardino 92401.**