

Ronn Richard Remarks
MyCom Next Generation Event
Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2014

Good evening, and thanks to each and every one of you for being here. It's wonderful to see so many segments of our community coming together for a common purpose.

I want to take a moment to recognize Russ Mitchell, who is never too busy with his anchor and editorial duties at Channel 3 to donate his time to worthy causes like this one.

I also want to acknowledge the Cleveland Foundation's Lisa Bottoms and the agency directors and students who bravely appeared up here to tell us about their communities and their commitments.

Each adult who stepped onto this stage today is a believer in the power and potential of our youth. And no one could have better validated the wisdom of investing in this next generation of leaders than the MyCom youth who shared their thoughts with us.

Now that you have heard from them, the focus shifts to you. If you arrived here unsure of what MyCom is, now you know.

Just look at the impact this program makes by connecting youth with caring adults and with organizations in their neighborhoods that are dedicated to helping our young people succeed in life!

Think about it. Maybe you were fortunate enough to know a teacher, counselor, coach, employer or other responsible adult who took an interest in you and mentored you in your youth. Just one person can change the trajectory of one child's life. There are unsung heroes out there doing it every day. Collectively, an army of dedicated individuals can impact a legion of kids.

I am well aware that many of you in this room are already part of the MyCom army, either formally or informally. That's great, because it doesn't have to be a formal arrangement. Use your imagination! However you choose to engage, bear in mind that MyCom is here, a valuable resource to connect the dots.

MyCom launched in 2008, when the Cleveland Foundation and Cuyahoga County convened public and private partners to create networks to support out-of-school time, school transitions,

and youth employment and engagement opportunities. In 2010, we identified eight pilot neighborhoods and connected each of them to these supportive networks.

Now we come to the next phase: broadening MyCom's geographic reach and rallying every segment of our community to join us.

For parents, MyCom can be a valuable partner in their child's development. For employers, MyCom can be a tool in the pipeline of talent development. In short, everyone wins.

All you really need is the desire to get involved. If you own a business, you can provide a kid with an internship or a part-time job, expose students to the work environment through job shadowing, speak to youth about the qualities of leadership at one of the many MyCom events or sponsor enriching after-school programs to keep youth safe and help them productively use this unstructured time.

Of course, you don't have to be in business to be of use. Consider the gifts any one of us can bring. We can volunteer to read to one student or an entire class, mentor youth in need of strong, positive role models or help students prepare for that looming school transition, whether it's from one grade to the next or whatever follows high school graduation.

If you can picture yourself in one or more of these scenarios, you'll want to connect with Lisa Bottoms at lbottoms@clevefdn.org or Mike Matthews at Michael@neighborhoodleadership.org. They will be thrilled to hear from you.

Whether you are a business owner, a nonprofit CEO, a parent or a passionate volunteer focused on the next generation, now is the time to join MyCom. Make your commitment to our community.

I will leave you with this final thought: At some point in life, most of us are tested for our IQs, but not for our GQs – our giving quotients. If we were, how would we score?

You can Google a list of famous mentors, rich in GQ, who were instrumental in the development of their equally famous protégés. Some of these celebrity pairings are household names; for example:

- Bob Dylan and his mentor, Woody Guthrie
- Or Quincy Jones and his mentor, Ray Charles

But for every pair like that, there are others in which the mentor is faceless, largely unknown:

- Like Mary Duncan, who was Oprah Winfrey's fourth-grade teacher
- Or Frank and Pam Walker, who were LeBron James' parents-by-proxy for a time in Akron

It's not celebrity that matters. Even if we're known only to our families and friends, we all have the ability to touch lives because we all have that latent giving quotient. Thanks to MyCom, here's your chance to tap into yours for the benefit of our future: our community's children.

Thank you for joining us today. Please travel safely on your way home.