



The Enquirer/Eamon Queeney

Marcia Patterson sets up a game of Jenga with 10-year-old Diamond McBerry during their weekly meetings. Patterson is part of the YMCA's mentoring program.

New mentor inspired by Oprah's advice

Mother of two matched with 10-year-old in YMCA program

By John Johnston
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Marcia Patterson had long wanted to be a mentor.

"But I had to be in the right place in my own life before I knew that I could help shape somebody else's," said the 50-year-old Pleasant Run resident, a divorced mother of two teens.

She credits none other than Oprah Winfrey, whose TV talk show she's been watching for many years, with helping her get to that place.

"I call her my mentor. I'm her student. She has helped me be a better me."

Patterson, an account manager for a software company, often heard Winfrey talk about creating a "vision board" — a poster board with images and words that serve as a reminder of personal aspirations.

Three years ago, Patterson made such a board. It included the words: "I want to be a role model."

A couple of years later, with the Oprah show in search of "ultimate viewers," Patterson wrote in.

She was among 150 fans selected to be in the audience last

About YMCA Mentoring

Adult volunteers commit one hour per week for one year. Mentors, who receive a free YMCA membership, meet with their mentees at a YMCA or school, with a focus on improving academic performance, relationships and behavior. About 80 students ages 6-18 are in the program, which is funded by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Information: 513-246-3230.

September for the premiere show of the final season.

During the show, Winfrey announced that she was taking each ultimate viewer and a guest on an all-expense-paid trip to Australia for 10 days in December.

Before leaving on the trip with her son, Tyler, Patterson logged on to the Volunteer Match website, found information about the YMCA Mentoring program, and began mentor training classes.

Something Winfrey told the

group during the trip also resonated with Patterson: "She said, 'I can touch a lot of lives with my talk show. Your life can be your talk show.'"

Back in Cincinnati, Crayona McBerry, a single mother of three from Colerain Township, heard about the YMCA Mentoring program through Mount Airy Elementary, where her 10-year-old daughter, Diamond, is in fifth grade.

McBerry signed her up.

In January, the Y matched Patterson with Diamond. They've been meeting weekly at the Clippard Y in Colerain Township, where Patterson is a member.

Sometimes she helps Diamond with homework. Sometimes they play games. Sometimes they just chat.

"Ms. Marcia brings out a light in Diamond," the girl's mother said.

"She has a lot of things to offer. And Diamond loves her." Diamond said she especially enjoys being with Patterson when "we make things together."

One day Patterson brought magazines and helped Diamond create a vision board.

