

The Frances Maitland Memorial Lecture 2004
Presented by David Lichtenauer, BS, MA
Frances M. Maitland: Renaissance Woman, Mentor/Angel and Friend

For those of us who had the opportunity to work with Frances Maitland, it is always an emotional experience to reflect on the time we had with her and to be reminded of the powerful impact she had on our lives. Frances is much more than a memory to us. She is more like a living presence in the way we go about our work in medical education. For those of you who never had an opportunity to know her, please join with us in toasting a master mentor who made every moment with her count. Many people allow the prevailing winds to carry them where they may and let circumstances shape them. Frances, however, was one of those rare spirits who liked to shape the environment and help set the standards and moral climate around her. She was one of those few people whose words informed the way we thought and whose deeds changed the way we lived.

Had Frances not reached out to me at the time of my first Alliance Conference almost thirty years ago, I would have fled away from the national CME community and never returned. As a Medical Sciences Liaison in Education for The Upjohn Company, my director had assigned me to attend the ACME Conference to see what could be done to improve our company's relationships with CME Providers. Today, I look at the long history of the CME Provider/Industry relationship and know it appears that this assignment of working ethically together to improve patient care is a never-ending quest. At that conference, I had been there only a few hours before one of the physician executives whom I had just met asked me if my company would provide \$50,000 for a pet project. Frances' sharp ears picked up on the conversation and my negative response. I became known that day by CME'ers as the industry representative who said: "I make it a practice never to give money to strangers."

She did one additional thing for me that day. Frances took the time to find out why I had come to the conference. After listening, she "tucked me under her wing" much like a mother hen does for her chick. The next thing I knew I had been introduced to the key national players in medical education. I then found myself by her side sitting in with the right committees as she had quickly perceived that some of my goals would help make the Alliance become a stronger, more inclusive organization. During the years that followed, she was more than a special colleague to me because she became a wonderful friend. I still have a program from the West Virginia State Medical Association that was our first of many joint faculty roles we carried out together. As a confidant, she was a joy to work with because she always motivated you to attain the highest ideals to which you could aspire.

That is what mentors do! Mentoring is a dynamic reciprocal relationship in a work environment between two individuals where often, but not always, one is an advanced career incumbent and the other is a less experienced person. The relationship is generally aimed at fostering the development of the less experienced person. Mentors are important because they take you to the next level with their experience and wisdom.

Does mentoring work? It most certainly does. Forty-six percent of children mentored are less likely to use drugs. Twenty-seven percent of children mentored are less likely to use alcohol. Fifty-two percent of children mentored are less likely to skip a day of school. Thirty-three percent of children mentored are less likely to hit someone and eighty-six percent of children mentored go on to college. Grade point averages went higher among children who are mentored. Children who are mentored learned to trust parents or guardians more as they feel more supported. (1)

For some years now much has been known about the impact of mentoring on children. Now a great deal is being learned about its impact beyond the early years. It has been found that mentoring relationships are key to developing productive careers in academic medicine, law and business. Such alliances in the CME community are somewhat informal. They are hard to measure and hold

a certain “mystery”. Frances Maitland, by her very being, held the keys that unlocked this mystery for many of us as we navigated our way to acceptance in the medical education world. This past year a study published in Academic Medicine found that ninety-eight percent of those who took part ranked “lack of mentoring” as the first (42%) or the second (56%) most important factor hindering their career progress in academic medicine. (2) An informal mentoring process in memory of Frances was established several years ago here at the Alliance conference. Potential mentors and mentees are matched and have an opportunity to start the process that is beneficial for all that take part. If you are starting out and do not have a mentor, take the time to seek one or more among your associates, colleagues and friends. Look for someone whose opinions are respected by peers, someone who can put your interests and concerns ahead of their own agenda, someone who will be available to you and someone who can understand your goals and keep your confidences.

The advantage to the person being mentored is well documented as obvious, but what if someone asks you to be his or her mentor? Do you feel prepared to handle such a role? Being a mentor can have as many advantages for you as for the person receiving your advice, especially if you link with a good performer whom you help turn into a great performer who is highly valued by your organization. If you are a true mentor and become more than just a coach, you must be willing to share both your wisdom and personal experience on the subtle-but critical aspects of success.

A true mentor will clue in a worker about organization politics, past work histories of various players or other unspoken rules along the workplace road. If you wish to be a mentor it’s best to do a brief assessment to make sure the relationship can be valuable and/or rewarding for both parties. For example, are you in a position so that:

- Your own behavior can stand the light of day?

Role models do not have things to hide, skeletons in the closet that can jump out during a mentoring experiences. If you can’t practice what you preach, then neither can anyone else.

- You can help set the stage for success by recognizing the potential of the mentee?

Once you are aware of the mentee’s abilities, can you act as an advocate and promote your protégé in the organization and help create opportunities for them to excel?

- You will be available to take someone “under your wing” and be an advocate?

Mentorship is not a 24/7 task, but does take the time to keep the lines of communication open and to facilitate relationships for those that count on you for advice and introductions.

- You are willing to listen and learn?

Mentoring isn’t just about your issuing wise proclamations, then going back to your own business. You’re there to understand the other person, his or her strengths and weaknesses. You then use your experience to guide and coach another worker down the correct path. This is a learning experience, even for the mentor who can gain a new perspective from the mentee.

- You can expand their network opportunities?

It could be that if your workplace were to burn down, the thing you wish firefighters could save would be your contact list. Who you know is one of the key elements for mentoring. You will use your contacts to smooth the path of the mentee, granting them access to those who can approve and improve their ideas.

- You will be able to enhance the protégé by improving his or her sense of self through positive feedback and encouragement as well as through constructive criticism?
- You are ready to share the glory?

A mentor is not afraid to share accolades with a mentee. In fact that’s part of what keeps the mentee going. The mentor should be willing to cheer on the mentee, serve as a sort of personal

advocate within the organization ranks, trying to gain the notice of others for the mentee's talents without being concerned that the endorsement will be a threat to their own success.

For many years, Frances Maitland fulfilled all these requirements for many of us in the CME community and along the way became a treasured friend. In my case, her influence, like a submerged boat propeller, drove me on and lifted my spirits in a way that benefited me in multiple ways professionally and personally warmed my heart. In Luke 22:43 it says: "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven that strengthened him." Today, as those of us who worked with Frances mentor others and "pay it forward to the next generation" we find that she will always be an angel in our midst watching the process. Mentors, like Frances, are quiet angles who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.

References

- (1) Kinship of Polk County, The Kindred Spirit, Does Mentoring Work, Northern Currents, Section 13, April 2003
- (2) Jackson et al, Having the right Chemistry: A Qualitative Study of Mentoring in Academic Medicine, Academic Medicine, Vol. 78, No. 3, March 2003