



J.R. Parrish is pleased to announce San Jose resident Meril R. Smith as the recipient of the You Don't Have to Learn the Hard Way Mentor Appreciation Scholarship. The national scholarship competition coincided with the release of Parrish's book, *You Don't Have to Learn the Hard Way* (BenBella Books, May 2009), and was established to celebrate mentoring and the impact it can make on young lives. Smith is receiving \$10,000 to give to a high school senior or undergraduate student of his choice.

The money will be given to Smith on Oct. 20 in an **event open to the press**. Parrish's mentee, Jeff Fredericks of Colliers International Silicon Valley, founded by Parrish, will present a check at the United Way Building (1922 The Alameda) at 8:15 a.m. during its "All Hands" meeting. The meeting will be on the ground floor, immediately adjacent to the parking lot, which is behind the building and accessed from McKendrie Street.

"My life was completely changed by a mentor in 1968, and there is no question I attribute most of my success to what this man taught me," Parrish said. "I especially feel young people deserve the chance to be exposed to the things that can lead them to success."

A former Edenvale Elementary School principal, Smith was chosen out of more than 300 applicants from across the nation. He runs Adopt-A-College, a program promoting higher education through relationships with universities and raising college scholarship funds for former Edenvale Elementary students, who, at one time, had a high-school dropout rate of 43 percent. This dropout rate has lowered to 23 percent since the Adopt-A-College Program has started.

In his essay written for the Mentor Appreciation Scholarship competition, Smith wrote this about his mentor:

"As a youngster, I did not know how to read in first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade. In sixth grade a marvelous teacher, Gerry Schmidt, told me I was going to learn to read or we would both die trying. I believed him and I did. Mr. Schmidt literally saved my life and motivated me to stay in school and eventually go to college. I never forgot....I remembered that Gerry Schmidt changed my life because he really believed in me and knew he was the person who could make the difference in my young life. I wanted to be that person in the lives of Edenvale students."

Parrish said choosing Smith was easy for him.

"Mr. Smith is the perfect example of being mentored and then becoming a mentor. The Adopt-A-College Program that he established has been a huge success and has given out over \$323,000 in scholarships to more than 500 young people to help them with college," he said. "This is a compelling mentoring story, to say the least, and Meril is having the check for the scholarship made out to the Adopt-A-College Program to help even more of the deserving kids with scholarships."

For more information or to contact J.R. Parrish or Meril Smith for an interview, e-mail Adrienne Lang at adrienne@benbellabooks.com or call 214.750.3600.

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