Supporting higher education has become a community responsibility. *Friends* connects University College to its donors by showcasing the work that the college is doing with undergraduates.
To Our Friends ~

Many students are supported through mentoring, partnerships, and relationships with other student leaders in University College. The students involved in these programs improve their communication skills and networking abilities, and develop a stronger sense of self-awareness. Developing relationships with students and staff members fosters a deeper connection to University College and the IUPUI campus community. This *Friends* issue focuses on a leader within a local company that is improving the college experience for many students through a very important mentoring fund that he graciously created.

Scott E. Evenbeck
Dean of University College

Making a difference in the Community

Spencer Harris, Store Director at the Southport Road Meijer in Indianapolis, knows how community involvement can help change lives.

“I grew up in a family of ten children and my father had to work two jobs at times to send us to school. I know what it’s like to be on the receiving end of some help.”

Harris, a third-degree black belt in *tae kwon do* also understands how strongly mentors can impact the lives of their students. One of his mentors, Master Han Cha Kyo worked with Harris for 26 years, teaching Harris not only about the martial arts, but also about the importance of giving and helping where you can.

Harris and Kyo even worked together on the physical rehabilitation of a disabled veteran who was unable to walk when he started taking self-defense classes at Kyo’s studio. By the end of his work with Harris and Kyo, the veteran was able to walk again. “A true miracle!” Harris explains. “He worked hard and we worked hard with him.”

His continued generosity to the people of Indiana is highlighted by the numerous awards and recognitions he proudly displays from a variety of local and national groups that have benefited from his commitment to the people of Indianapolis. He was recently featured on the cover of *Indiana Minority Business* along with Danica Patrick and was the recent recipient of a Community Activist Award from Radio One to celebrate that company’s 25th anniversary. When Harris accepted the Radio One accolades, he was certainly in good company as the other awardees included Aretha Franklin, Danny Glover and Janet Jackson.
Harris speaks proudly of his multiple collaborations with schools and nonprofit organizations. He becomes especially animated when he talks about supporting an astronomy club at Mary Bryan Elementary School or about his store's support of an accelerated reading program at that school which has led to the highest reading scores in the state. He boasts that he is currently working with 14 local schools to help them reach new levels in educational excellence.

“It’s important to help the educational system from elementary school all the way up to graduate school, because those students are the future of our country.”

Keeping that in mind, Harris has facilitated the developing partnership between Meijer and University College. At the 2006 fall picnic for incoming students, Harris' store provided all the food, and Harris was able to address the class of 2010. “I wished them luck and told them how glad I am to be a part of their beginnings at IUPUI.”

When asked about why he gives as much to the community as he does, Harris reflects on how giving to the community provides the giver with a heart-warming feeling. He firmly believes that you get back what you give and that one of the reasons his Meijer store has been the number one store in the market for the past six years is its commitment to education and other causes in Indianapolis.

“Customers are aware of our activities and reciprocate by shopping at [Southport Road] Meijer,” Harris states.

Follow Spencer Harris’ lead and help University College act as a catalyst for change in a young person’s life. Your donations will help fund more mentors and scholarships for deserving students.