

For Immediate Release  
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## **PROJECT MENTOR STUDENTS VISIT GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE**

**Columbus, Ohio** -- Thirty-six eighth grade Mifflin Middle School students had an opportunity to meet Ohio First Lady Frances Strickland and visit the Ohio Governor's Residence on May 1, thanks to Project Mentor and Continental Office Environments.

The Project Mentor students and their volunteer mentors – most of whom are associates of Continental – were invited to visit the residence and participate in a variety of learning activities.

This was a special May Day field trip for students in the Mifflin International Middle School Project Mentor program. They took a bus to the Governor's Residence, personally met the First Lady and Governor, and had a chance to participate in learning activities, all with their volunteer mentor by their side. Each match will now work together to make a special scrapbook of memories from the visit.

Project Mentor is a collaborative effort of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio and Columbus City Schools, with Nationwide Foundation as lead sponsor. During its first year, Project Mentor launched mentoring programs at every Columbus City Middle School. More than 1,000 volunteer mentors were recruited from the community at large, plus business, civic, government and faith-based partners.

As the Project Mentor Volunteer Partner at Mifflin International? Middle School, Continental has provided 18 mentors to the program, which reflects 20% of the company's office employees.

"We believe in Project Mentor because we are committed to making a difference in our community and helping students get a good start in life," said Ira Sharfin, President and CEO of Continental Office Environments, who is himself a mentor in the program. Along with the other Project Mentor volunteers, he visits Mifflin Middle School once a week for an hour and mentors a student. "Participating in Project Mentor has been an extremely rewarding experience. The kids are really terrific. I look forward to my Wednesday meetings with my mentee because we learn so much about each other."

"Project Mentor is an opportunity for our community to mobilize in a way never yet accomplished to achieve a goal that can help determine the future of our children and our

community,” said Ed Cohn, President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio.

Project Mentor’s seven-year rollout calls for 10,000 volunteer mentors saturating every one of the Columbus City Schools to help individuals students and to improve the overall school environment.

Project Mentor is recruiting now for volunteers to start mentoring in the fall of 2008. To volunteer or get your organization involved, call 614-839-KIDS (5437) or visit [www.projectmentorcolumbus.org](http://www.projectmentorcolumbus.org).

#### *About Continental Office Environments*

For more than 65 years, Continental Office Environments has partnered with businesses throughout the Midwest and across the nation to create innovative workplaces that reflect their clients’ brand and culture. One of the largest office interiors and furniture resources in the nation, Continental draws from the expertise of the world’s foremost furniture designers, bringing the latest in workplace solutions through a broad spectrum of products and services to its clients.

#### *About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio*

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio has been matching the at-risk children of central Ohio with caring adult mentors since 1933. In 2007, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio served over 4,800 children through our traditional one-to-one mentoring program, our one-to-one school-based mentoring program including Project Mentor, and our group mentoring program at Camp Oty’Okwa.