

This **employee profile** was written for the ERA Home Sellers' monthly newsletter.

Rich Mead

Balancing Work and Community

Balance. It's the one commodity in our highly demanding lives that seems to be in short supply. Too often, the demands of the workplace tend to dominate our time and unbalance our lives. Some folks, however, are able to maintain that balance, while still remaining quite productive at work. Such a person is Rich Mead.

A real estate broker for five years at ERA Home Sellers of Maine in South Portland, Rich has not only found the time for balance in his life, but he's also **giving back to the community**, as well.

Mentoring Youth

At 44, and single, Rich has spent the better part of this year working with the Portland Mentoring Alliance. It's an organization that works through the public school system to match students in need with mentors who can help find solutions for them. In the process, the mentors also serve as friends and **role models for the students**.

Since October, Rich has been mentoring a 16-year old Portland High student, Fred Butera, who came to this country two years ago from Zaire.

As someone from a foreign country, Fred's needs tend to be the kind that most of us never give a second thought to – like getting a driver's license or setting up a rental account at a video store. Rich has not only helped Fred solve these problems, but they also get together for fun stuff like Christmas shopping at L.L. Bean.

Their best excursion? Fred is a huge basketball fan. So, Rich took him to a Celtics game in Boston. It wasn't just any Celtics' game, however. It was a game against the New Jersey Nets – the team that Dikembe Mutombo plays for. Both Fred and Dikembe are from the same hometown, in Zaire - Kinshasa.

Going the Extra Mile

Last fall, Rich made a call to the Celtics to find out if Dikembe would meet with Fred after the game. The Celtics then contacted the Nets, who set up the meeting.

Rich kept this a secret from Fred until the end of the game. After the game was over, Rich and Fred walked down to the court to meet with Dikembe. Fred and Dikembe spoke to each other in French, and then Fred got his picture taken with Dikembe. An NBA all-star taking the time to meet with a teenager from his home country? How cool is that? Sometimes it's good to have a mentor.

Giving and Receiving

But Rich would be the first one to tell you that it's a two way street - that he gets as much out of the interaction, as the young people get from him. "I've never been married or had kids," Rich said. "So, doing these kinds of things with young people really **fills a need in my own life**. It's extremely satisfying."

Maybe that's why he also volunteers six days a week to coach the varsity boy's basketball team at Massabesic High. He sees himself as more than just a coach, though.

"I've always had a connection with kids," Rich explained. "So, it's quite rewarding to think that I can **pass on my life experiences** to young people. It's just amazing what you can achieve by opening up the lines of communication. Just asking questions, lending an ear, and spending time with them goes an awful long way."

Jane Ellis, Director of the Portland Mentoring Alliance, speaks quite highly of Rich. "He's just the kind of mentor we're looking for," Jane said. "Rich's consistency, upbeat personality, and his determination to make a difference in a young person's life makes him an ideal role model, and hopefully a friend for life to all those he mentors."

Balance... It's a good thing.