

Hamilton Park UMC (The Park's) UMW Hosts Honorable State Rep. Rhetta Bowers at Hamilton Park Pacesetter Magnet Elementary School

Just before the coronavirus (COVID-19) took over our lives in March 2020, Hamilton Park UMC (The Park's) United Methodist Women's unit hosted State Representative Rhetta A. Bowers, District 113, during its bi-weekly girls' mentoring "Diamonds" meeting.

Rep. Bowers is an active member of St. Paul UMC (Dallas) and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She is also an alumna of both Spelman College and Texas Southern University. Rep. Bowers shared with the girls the steps she took in her life and career that led to her involvement in local politics. She also stressed to the Diamonds the importance of giving back in their community and in exercising their right to vote when they become 18 years old.

The Diamonds Girls' Mentoring Program is an outreach ministry of the United Methodist Women (UMW) unit at Hamilton Park UMC (The Park), Dallas. The program is held at the Hamilton Park Pacesetter Magnet Elementary School (Richardson ISD) a few blocks from the church. This is the third year for the program that meets each Monday, from October through May, from 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

The girls selected to participate in the program, are fifth and sixth graders who have been identified by their teachers and counselors as needing hands-on guidance to keep them from becoming "at-risk" students. The program consists of workshops, field trips, special speakers, and arts and crafts. The girls are recognized for their good behavior, and there is a "graduation" at the end of the school year for the sixth graders who will go to middle school the next year.

This school year (and pre-COVID 19), a variety of activities were planned for the Diamonds, including a second visit to Blue Cross Blue Shield (to show the girls what a workplace looks like), as well as field trips to the Dallas Civil Rights Museum and the University of Texas at Dallas.

During the 2018-2019 school year, the Diamonds enjoyed visits from individuals with interesting careers such as Hamilton Park UMC (The Park) UMW president, Dr. Mary Nickson. Dr. Nickson talked about what it took for her to obtain her doctorate degree and her job as a psychologist. Workers from the local Bon Ton Farms were also guest speakers. They brought a goat and chickens to demonstrate where food originates and talked about farm life.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the girls visited WFAA-TV (the Dallas ABC affiliate) and learned about the production of a televised news broadcast. The Diamonds also traveled to the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) to hear the author of the book *Hidden Figures* speak.

The Hamilton Park UMC (The Park) UMW members who mentor the Diamonds are: Helen Bell, Jackie Ford, Kathy Griffin, Cynthia Harry, Shirley Pleasant, and Jackie Robinson. Karen Travitt, a community liaison for Blue Cross Blue Shield, is the mentoring group's non-Hamilton Park UMC (The Park) UMW member.

For more information about the Diamonds Girls' Mentoring Program, a UMW outreach ministry of Hamilton Park UMC (The Park) in Dallas, please contact Jackie Robinson, jbrob1979@gmail.com.

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Pictured above: State Representative Rhetta A. Bowers (far right) poses with Hamilton Park UMC (The Park) UMW and others after a Diamonds meeting.



Pictured above: Seven of the ten Diamonds pose with State Rep. Rhetta A. Bowers (far right) and her assistant (back, far left).