



# A TWO-WAY STREET: HOW MENTORING IS BENEFITTING A CHAMBER MENTOR AND MENTEE

By Matt Beardmore

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Clint Nichols benefitted from mentor relationships early in his career when he was trying to find his way. Now established as the Vice President of Finance at Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital, Nichols is enjoying his role as mentor to Chris Hoffman, associate at JP Morgan Chase in Houston, since they were paired up at a recent Conroe/Lake Conroe Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Network (YPN) event.

A graduate of Texas A&M's Mays Business School, Nichols landed his first job after college at Conroe Independent School District where he was a 7th and 8th grade teacher and coach. "I realized I couldn't do that the rest of my career," Nichols said. "One of my mentors at the time was in healthcare and guided me on how to prepare for interviews, what to do after an interview, and how to get a job at a top healthcare institution."

Nichols has now been at the Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital for the last 15-plus years, including the last two-plus in his current role.

Nichols, treasurer on the Conroe/Lake Conroe Chamber of Commerce's executive committee, first met Hoffman at the Chamber's board retreat in December 2022. Hoffman, a 2018 graduate of the University of Houston-Clear Lake and a U.S. Coast Guard veteran, attended the event as a diplomat, a volunteer role to help promote the Chamber and its benefits to the community.

That experience as a diplomat led Hoffman to join the YPN, which was established in early 2023 "to provide professional development, networking, mentoring, and volunteer opportunities to Chamber members under 40."

"I joined because I wanted to connect more with young professionals and be more involved," Hoffman said.

Nichols had never served as a mentor in such a formal role, but he jumped at the opportunity to participate in the YPN's Mentor "speed dating" event this past summer.

The pairing that came out of that event has developed into a nice partnership. Nichols and Hoffman meet regularly, including going out to breakfast and lunch and attending the chamber's monthly Morning Mingle events. They are also trying to set up a tee time in the near future.

"I enjoy being there to help, but it's not just Chris going to me, it's me going to him and us discussing how we would handle certain situations," Nichols said.

Hoffman has been pleased at how open and available Nichols has been.

"I know we've both been super busy, but I definitely feel comfortable sending him messages," said Hoffman, also the owner of South Houston Tennis Academy in El Lago. "I got married this fall and one thing I wanted to hear from Clint was about work-life balance. The advice was that there is no work-life balance; it's managing the moment and determining what is most important right now."

The way this mentoring partnership is growing and helping both Nichols and Hoffman learn and grow is exactly what the Chamber had in mind when it created the YPN.



*Young Professionals Network (YPN) participants at a recent professional development session.*



*YPN's mentor conducts its inaugural speed dating event*



*Mentor Clint Nichols (left) with mentee Chris Hoffman*