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**Breakthrough Study Finds Adults Mentored as Children
Are Better Educated and Wealthier than Peers**

***New Study Suggests Long-Term Benefits of Big Brothers Big Sisters
Mentoring Programs Help Break Cycles Linked to Poverty***

Painesville, Ohio—June 29, 2009— A study conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters finds adults mentored as children through Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs are more likely than peers with similar backgrounds, but who were not involved in the program, to have a four-year college degree and incomes of \$75,000 or more. They also report strong relationships with their spouses, children and friends.

“The children we serve are among America’s most vulnerable, whether they have one parent, live in households experiencing poverty or have a parent who is incarcerated,” said Tim Kehres, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio. “Independent research has told us for some time that Big Brothers Big Sisters improves the odds that the children we serve will succeed educationally and socially. This is our first large-scale examination of the long-term benefits, suggesting we have the potential to break cycles too often associated with family and community poverty. “

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The study revealed evidence that Big Brothers Big Sisters long-term structured mentoring program's effects reach far beyond the time those children are enrolled in mentoring programs.

Among the study's specific findings:

- Alumni were 75% more likely than non-alumni to have received a four-year college degree (28% of alumni vs. 16% of non-alumni).
- Over three quarters (77%) of adult alumni did better in school because of their "Big", two-thirds (65%) agree that their "Big" helped them reach a higher level of education than they thought possible and half (52%) agree that their "Big" kept them from dropping out of high school.
- Alumni were 39% more likely than non-alumni to have current household incomes of \$75,000 or higher (46% of alumni vs. 33% of non-alumni).
- Adult Littles were more likely than non-alumni to be engaged in their community over the past 12 months, particularly when it comes to volunteering (52% vs. 35%, respectively) and holding a leadership role in an organization working on an issue (29% vs. 16%, respectively).
- Large majorities of adult "Littles" say their "Big" provided stability when they needed it (90%) and changed their perspective on what they thought possible in life (81%).

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- A majority of alumni (62%) perceive themselves to have achieved a higher level of success than their peers who were not involved in big Brothers Big Sisters. Furthermore, this is twice as many as the 31% of non-alumni who report being more successful than other people they grew up with.

“These findings demonstrate the long-term value of our program,” says Kehres. “Foundations, individuals, corporations and public funders want to invest in programs proven to change lives and break cycles of poverty.”

A little more than half of the alumni Littles who participated in the study grew up in single-parent homes (52%) and describe their childhood financial situation as worse off than the average American household (51%). The Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni reported that having a “Big” in their lives positively influenced their self confidence, provided stability and changed their perspectives on life, taught them new things, influenced aspects of their education, pushing them to set higher goals and make better decisions.

Locally, the agency estimates that there are 16,000 children throughout Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties that are in need of an adult mentor. Over the past five years the agency has served approximately 1,400 children. According to Kehres, this figure could be significantly higher if more adults would volunteer to become mentors.

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Methodology

Between March 3 and April 16, 2009, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 449 adults, 200 of whom participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters as “Littles” for at least one year during their childhood and 249 who never participated in the program. Alumni “Littles” were sampled from a combination of Harris Interactive’s panel of respondents and Big Brothers Big Sisters lists. All 249 of the non-alumni were sampled from the Harris Interactive panel of online respondents. The non-alumni segment allows for a comparison between Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni and adults who had a similar profile as youth but who did not have a Big Brother or Big Sister as a youth. A full methodology is available.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest, largest and most effective youth mentoring organization in the US. Big Brothers Big Sisters has been the leader in one-to-one youth service for more than a century developing positive relationships that have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of young people.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio is a non-profit organization that has been part of the local community for more than 40 years. They provide mentors to children, ages six through 18, through two separate and distinct mentoring programs in Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties.

The programs are available at no cost to the children and their families.

In their traditional “match” program, caring adult volunteers, age 19 and older, are matched with children, in one-to-one relationships. The agency also operates after-school programs that are designed to help grade school children develop positive attitudes toward school, build self-esteem and have fun while improving their natural abilities and social skills. The goal of BBBSNEO is to provide a mentor to every child who needs and wants one.

Independent studies have proven that children matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister are:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 52% less likely to skip school
- 33% less likely to exhibit violent behavior

For children who participate in an after-school mentoring program:

- 64% have a more positive attitude toward school
- 58% get higher grades
- 60% improve peer relationships
- 64% develop higher levels of self esteem

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