



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Northeast Ohio

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Big Brothers Big Sisters Seeks High School Students

Agency gearing up to recruit mentors for after school programs

Painesville, Ohio—September 2, 2009— It's back to school for area children and back to recruiting for Big Brothers Big sisters of Northeast Ohio.

This year the non-profit organization will administer after school mentoring programs in 11 area elementary schools and that means finding enough high school students to volunteer to become Big Brothers and Big Sisters to all of the third through fifth graders enrolled in the programs.

“Our goal is to match each child in the program with his or her own Big Brother or Sister,” says Carole Niebes, Director of After School Programs. “Providing one-on-one attention is the key to the success of our programs. High school student “Bigs” must have their own transportation and we ask that they commit to a minimum of one semester but would prefer them to stay with the program for the entire school year—from October to May.”

The elementary schools that will have a Big Brothers Big Sisters after school mentoring program this year include Chestnut, Maple, McKinley, Hambden, Headlands, Westwood, Burton, Jefferson, Lindsey, Perry and Cardinal.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters Seeking cont.

Something new this year is expanded programming in two schools, Hambden and Westwood Elementary that will meet two days a week instead of the usual one day.

According to Big Sister Chelsea Smith, “The program is awesome. My little sis and I had such a good time. Sometimes we worked on a project and sometimes we just talked. We really did become friends and it was great to watch her actually do better in school.”

Children enrolled in the programs are recommended by their teacher, guidance counselor or parent. “Sometimes a student needs a little extra attention to flourish,” says Niebes. “The latest research available confirms what we already know and that is that after school mentoring has a significant positive influence—creating a better self image and improving a the student’s attitude and performance in the classroom.”

The after school programs take place immediately after school in a designated area within the elementary school. They are monitored by a Big Brothers Big Sisters staff member whose lesson plan includes an educational activity and snack. There is plenty of time for the matches to play a game, work on a craft or sit and talk. All after school programs are free to the children and their families. However, with recent funding cuts the agency is exploring new ways to support the programs, each of which costs approximately \$10,000 to operate annually.

For more information about becoming a high school volunteer Big or for becoming an after school program sponsor check out the agency’s website at www.bbbsneo.org or contact Carole Niebes at 440-352-2526.

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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