



PRESS RELEASE

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**Contact: Lynne Strah
Director of Marketing & Communications
Days: (440) 352-2526
E-mail: lstrah@bbbsneo.org**

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS SEEKING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BECOME VOLUNTEER MENTORS

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio is recruiting Lake and Geauga County high school students to become Big Brothers and Big Sisters in their after school programs

Painesville, Ohio, September 20, 2011 – As the new school year begins in Lake and Geauga counties, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio is gearing up to find high school students interested in becoming mentors to third through fifth grades enrolled in their after school mentoring programs.

“We’ve been providing after school mentoring programs for elementary school children for 13 years now,” says Carole Niebes, the non-profit agency’s director of after school programs. “This year we will have programs in Garfield, Brentmoor, Maple, McKinley/Willoughby, Jefferson, Cardinal, Lindsey, Chestnut, Westwood, Kenston and McKinley/Fairport Harbor elementary schools. Our goal is to provide each elementary student with his or her own high school Big Brother or Big Sisters. That means we’re looking for between 150 and 175 high school students to volunteer.”

According to Niebes, becoming an after school mentor requires being able to make a commitment to get to their assigned elementary school one day each week while school is in session. Typically, the high school students would arrive immediately after school and spend approximately two hours with the child they are matched with. During that time, on-site Big Brothers Big Sisters after school coordinators set up a planned educational activity and provide a snack for the students and their mentors. Free time is built into the program to give Bigs and their Littles an opportunity to talk and get to know one another.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio cont.

“It makes me feel proud to watch my Little grow,” says Harvey High School student Brandon Bowden. “I have a little sister at home, but it’s fun to have someone outside your family look up to you.”

Most high school students start volunteering to be a Big Brother or Big Sister as soon as they are able to drive or find a ride to the elementary schools because all volunteers must provide their own transportation. They also go through an interview process that leads to them being matched with a child they are compatible with.

Ideally, the agency likes to have the volunteers come back for years, so that they can keep the matches together, forming a stronger bond. Cierra Stanko, a student at Perry High School, is one such student. “I love Big Brothers Big Sisters,” she says. “I’ve done this program for two years and plan on doing it for two more.”

By providing them with positive role models the after school programs definitely benefit the younger children helping them develop higher self-esteem and improving their social skills, peer relationships, classroom behavior and grades. Having a mentor encourages the children to feel good about themselves, to think about goals and making better choices.

These programs also benefit the high school mentors. Studies show that high school Bigs say they improved their interpersonal skills, learned to communicate better, became more patient and responsible, reliable and organized. In addition, mentoring fulfills most high school service hour requirements and makes an attractive and influential addition to college and job applications.

According to Jackie Roznik, a student at West Geauga High School, “I highly recommend Big Brothers Big Sisters. The best part is when you see the smile of their faces because they feel special. It is truly rewarding to know that you are making a difference in a young child’s life.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters after school mentoring programs will begin October 1. High school students interested in learning more about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio after school mentoring programs or would like an application, log onto the agency’s website at www.bbbsneo.org or call 440-352-2526.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio cont.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio, is a donor and volunteer supported mentoring network that has been helping vulnerable children in Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties beat the odds for more than 40 years. Their programs, offered free of charge, include:

- the tradition “match” program that matches caring adult volunteers, age 18 and older, with children between the ages of six through 15
- after school mentoring programs that utilize high school student volunteers to mentor elementary school children in grades three through five one day a week after school
- Big Brothers Big Sisters/ E City Lake County, an entrepreneurial/business class, that recruits local business men and women to mentor high school students enrolled in the class by offering guidance and advice as they create a business and produce a product or service

Big Brothers Big Sisters believes every child has the ability to succeed and thrive in life. Most children served by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio are in single-parent households. The organization depends on donations to help conduct background checks on volunteers to ensure child safety; and provide ongoing support for children, families and volunteers to build and sustain long-lasting relationships, key to successful mentoring.

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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