



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release**

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BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF NORTHEAST OHIO NEW MENTORING PROGRAM CHANGING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS ARE IN PRISON

Amachi Ohio mentoring program designed to break the cycle of incarceration.

Painesville, Ohio – March 4, 2011 – At a time when funding for mentoring programs is being eliminated, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio continues to be strong and grow, fulfilling its mission of helping area children become the best they can be. They do this by providing quality mentoring relationships with supportive adults, and educational programs, supervised by a professional staff.

The non-profit agency is constantly seeking ways to reach out to new segments of children in need. That is why the organization has collaborated with other Ohio Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies to form Amachi Ohio, a mentoring program designed to identify and help children of incarcerated parents.

Locally, the number of children with one or more parents in prison continues to rise. In Lake County, about 1,200 times each year an adult is incarcerated. Sixty four percent (64%) of the offenders have children. These children face unique challenges and significant risk including living in poverty, exposure to substance abuse and criminal behavior, chaos and instability, behavior problems, school failure and juvenile delinquency. Research indicates 70% of children of incarcerated parents become incarcerated themselves. Without intervention at the time of incarceration, the cycle may never be broken.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi Ohio mentoring cont.

“We’re excited about adding this new program,” says Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio executive director Tim Kehres. “It allows us to help an ever-growing segment of children at risk by giving them a resource, a support system, a confidant, friend and positive role model, at a time when they are most vulnerable. By placing a mentor in their life at a critical time we can decrease the likelihood of the children engaging in risky and illegal behaviors. That is good for the children and the community.”

The service area of the northeast Ohio program includes Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula, Lorain, Cuyahoga, Trumbull, Mahoning, Stark, Summit and Medina counties. Youth must be between the ages of 4-18 to participate in the program. Nearly four out of five in the existing program are currently being raised by single mothers and nearly four out of five live in households with annual incomes of less than \$30,000.

The northeast Ohio regional Amachi Ohio manager, Lois Pozega, will be responsible for helping the Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies throughout the coverage area identify children of incarcerated parents, recruit volunteers to become mentors to the children and assist in training those volunteers.

“According to Pozega, who will work out of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio office in Painesville, “ [Quote from Lois here: One or two sentences.](#)

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi Ohio, or to refer a child, visit AmachiOhio.org. To learn more about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio, or to become a Big Brother or Big Sister, log onto the agency’s website www.bbbsneo.org or call 440-352-2526.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Ohio, is a donor and volunteer supported mentoring network that has been providing mentors to children in Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties for more than 40 years. The programs, offered free of charge, include:

the traditional “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

lunch buddy mentoring which recruits senior citizens to mentor children in grades three through five in their elementary school during their lunch hour

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 and offer guidance and advice as they create

a business and produce a product

Amachi Ohio program which matches children, ages four through 18, of incarcerated parents with a trained adult volunteer

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Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi Ohio mentoring cont

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. SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) has given Big Brothers Big Sisters the designation of effective program for the prevention of drug and alcohol use by youth. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has given Big Brothers Big Sisters the designation of Blueprint Program.

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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