




# Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg & Rockingham County

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Harrisonburg City Council  
**FROM:** Susan Totty, Executive Director   
**DATE:** September 8, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** Update on Big Brothers Big Sisters Program Services

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg –Rockingham County (BBBS) appreciates the continuing support of the Harrisonburg City Council. The annual funding enables us to provide mentoring services to children (Littles) ages 4-18 enrolled in schools throughout the city. So far in 2015, 508 children have received services through our Community and School/Site Based Programs, with a current caseload of 306 children. Sixty-two percent (191) of the current matches are enrolled in the city schools. Our goal is to match 150 new children this fall, bringing our total number served to approximately 650 children.

BBBS prides itself on developing innovative services to meet the growing challenges and needs of local children. Some of our new and innovative programs include:

- **Enhanced School –Based Mentoring Program**  
This program is a component of the We Read To Succeed community-wide initiative led by United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. The initiative is designed to ensure that more students in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County are reading at grade level by the end of third grade.
  - The Enhanced School-Based Program will continue services to 41 children in K-3 in city schools and 29 children in the county and add 10 children in Pre-K from Waterman Head Start. The Pre-K program is beginning its second year as a pilot project. Children are referred to the program based on reading assessment scores. The adult mentors use a variety of strategies to increase the student's interest and aptitude in reading.
- **Grand Bigs Program**  
BBBS is partnering with the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community (VMRC) to match residents with kindergarten children at Waterman Elementary. The residents will be enrolled as adult mentors (Bigs) and meet with their assigned child (Little) at the school for one hour every other week. VMRC will provide transportation for the five residents enrolled in the pilot program.
- **Young Women's Leadership Project**  
The project will serve 40 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls at Thomas Harrison and Skyline Middle School beginning September 15. The project will provide the girls with an adult mentor combined with weekly after school learning opportunities and a summer camp. A school staff member will serve as the school/club sponsor to assist with the after-school activities focused on healthy behaviors, self esteem, career exploration and leadership.

The project is being developed in partnership with Camp Horizons, James Madison University and Harrisonburg City Schools with funding from the Merck Foundation and private donations.

- **High School Bigs Program**  
BBBS is piloting a High Schools Bigs program at East Rockingham High School in collaboration with Ms. Karla Berry and her Mentorship Class. We hope to enroll about 10 students as High School Bigs to be matched with children in nearby elementary schools. The Bigs will meet with their assigned child for one hour a week during school hours.
- **Hispanic Mentoring Services**  
Renewed funding from Cargill, Inc. will support expanded services to Hispanic families in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. We are partnering with leadership from Cargill facilities in Timberville, Dayton and Mt. Crawford to develop more outreach to children of associates and to recruit volunteers.

Currently, the waiting list maintained at our office for the Community-Based Mentoring Program is comprised of 133 children which includes 95 children who reside in the city. School liaisons maintain a list of potential Littles to be matched with a volunteer who wants to participate in the School/Site-Based Mentoring Program. The need for mentors will never be exhausted and your support each year helps make the outcomes below possible for more children.

Local evaluation data demonstrates that children enrolled in BBBS mentoring programs experienced the following positive outcomes in 2014:

- Maintained or increased confidence in academic abilities (75%)
- Maintained or improved grades (66%)
- Maintained or increased disapproval of unhealthy behaviors (75%)
- Felt that they had a strong relationship with their mentor (95%)
- Indicated a desire to attend college (78%)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg-Rockingham County has been providing services in Harrisonburg for nearly 40 years. We are proud to have grown to serve more children annually than any other Big Brothers Big Sisters agency in the state of Virginia at a cost per child at least 25% below the national average. High quality services have remained at the forefront of the agency resulting in recognition as one of the highest performing Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliates in the nation. This means local matches last longer and are stronger than most across the country. We appreciate the continued support from the Harrisonburg City Council to help change the lives of local children for the better, through one-to-one mentoring.