

Case for Support

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is the oldest and largest mentoring agency in the United States, serving nearly 250,000 youth annually and over three million since its inception. The organization strives to show children they matter by matching them with a caring, adult volunteer for a minimum one year commitment. Locally, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas was incorporated in 1993, and made its first match in December of 1995 between a University of Arkansas student and a six year old Fayetteville boy, whose father died when he was three years old. Since that time, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas has continued to serve Benton and Washington County children through community and site-based programs. In 2010, the agency served 349 children and currently has a goal of supporting even more matches in 2011.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas is committed to not only serving children, but ensuring that they are served with a quality program. *We are proud to be one of the top performing agencies in the Big Brothers Big Sisters network and we were recently presented with the "Quality Award"*. Quality is determined by the strength and length of the organization's one-to-one matches. In 2010 our community-based matches lasted for an average of 26 months and for the site-based program, 14 months, which was one of the longest in the nation! Through our programs, trained professionals recruit, screen, match and support Big and Little Brothers and Sisters, adding to the lasting impact of their relationship.

In 1995 a random control study, conducted by Public/Private Ventures measured the impact of Big Brothers Big Sisters' community-based programs on youth served. According to this study, youth served in community-based matches are 46% less likely to use illegal drugs, 27% less likely to use alcohol, 52% less likely to skip school, 37% less likely to skip class, and one-third less likely to hit someone. In addition, they get along better with friends, family members, and teachers. In the past 18 years Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas has also made a tremendous impact on the children of our community. However, as the number of vulnerable children in our community continues to grow, we have to ensure our commitment to responding to their urgent needs.

As Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas looks into the future, we realize the need to continue to serve more children in Benton and Washington Counties who are considered at-risk. Though Northwest Arkansas is thriving and growing in many ways, with the steady increase in population, challenges will continue to rise, especially for our children. According to the most current U.S. Census figures, Benton County has 14% of its children living in poverty and 20% living in single-parent households. Also, its juvenile arrest rate is the 6th highest of all Arkansas counties. Washington County has similar statistics, with 17% of children living in poverty, 24% living in single-parent households and has the 4th highest juvenile arrest rate in the state. Also notable is that poverty rates for Hispanic and African American families and families headed by a single female are higher in Arkansas than the national average. These are the families we serve, and it is only through the continued generosity and support of the community that we are able to do the powerful work of showing children they matter.

You can help us make a positive impact by making a financial gift to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas. It costs approximately \$1,000 to make one match, but what a difference one match can make! We depend on donations to ensure child safety and provide support for our children. Additionally, donations enable us to carefully recruit, interview, and screen each volunteer before matching him/her with a child and to carefully interview each child and guardian to ensure a quality match. They also help to provide each match with close support by a professional case manager; sponsors activities for matches at various times throughout the year; and enables us the opportunity to expand our programs into new schools, neighborhoods, and communities!