



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada | context



Quality volunteer mentoring

Get involved. That's the message coming from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. Since 1913, the organization has supported children ages six through 16 by providing them with an adult mentor, someone with whom to spend time doing activities enjoyed by both, whether it be baking, throwing a football, or playing video games...you name it! A simple concept, indeed, but one that has resulted in budding relationships and thousands of volunteers across Canada.

Traditionally, Big Brothers Big Sisters asks for a one-year commitment from volunteers, giving their time for a few hours on a weekly basis, to be involved in community-based programs, whether it be walks in the park, visits to shopping malls, and so on. As the oldest and largest program of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the organization has over the years seen profound results from this one-on-one interaction. More recently, Big Brothers Big Sisters has added more programs, like In School Mentoring, in which volunteers visit a local elementary school—not in an academic or tutoring program—but rather to build a friendship.

Those involved in the program begin with a referral source, generally from a family, school setting, or social services organization, feeling a child could use a boost and would benefit from the presence of a Big Brother or Big Sister mentor. These programs keep students more connected and more interested in school, with the hope that it will build his or her desire to not only stay in school, but look forward to attending.

What makes a mentor

All things considered, what makes a good fitting mentor for Big Brothers Big Sisters? According to Bruce Macdonald, President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters, "There is no sort of magic type of mentor. The basic requirements are that they want to spend time with a child, they're willing to make the commitment, and that they're deemed to be a safe person."

"Volunteers come from all walks of life, from highly educated professions, to small business owners, to people that work with their hands, so the best mentors are the ones that want to be the kid's friend and not come in and try to change the world."

According to the organization's internal research, children who have benefitted from a volunteer mentor are less likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol, are more likely to stay in school, and have better relationships with friends and family. Over time, the program's impact helps these children make positive life choices. Added Macdonald, "Mentors help build healthy communities with kids coming through Big Brother Big Sister programs, with the aspirations, self-esteem and self-confidence to make good choices during the turbulent adolescent years...Kids learn to be productive contributors to the system."

Community involvement

Conducted at the local level, community program development truly begins at the grassroots. In terms of financial sustainability, the last few years have been tough, as was the case for most charitable organizations.



As such, Big Brothers Big Sisters look for traditional funding sources, individuals as donors, to work with the foundation community and special event fundraising, in addition to receiving some government funding, though that amount is a significantly smaller portion of the organization's budget.

"Every one of our local member agencies has different ways of raising funds, and the most common [across the country] is our national Bowl for Kids Sake program, a class bowl-a-thon, so it is a lot of fun, with people wanting to support this cause," Macdonald said. "It is the most common fundraiser and it is universally applied." "Over the last few years, the number of kids served has gone up, while the number of agencies has gone down, so we are finding ways to create long-term sustainable health at the local level by being open to new business models, so all those things are discussed to make sure we are around for a long time. The success of our mentoring programs is not measured in days or weeks, but rather months or years, so we need to be able to have long-term sustainability when we are delivering service."

Program development

As the core of the organization, Big Brothers Big Sisters offers several specialized development programs. That list includes the recently launched Go Girls, a group setting where females ages 12 to 14 learn about body image, healthy eating, and good lifestyle choices from a Big Sister. The success of this program has resulted in a similar program for Big Brothers, known as Game On, to 'eat smart, play smart, and live smart'.

Tying in with the organizational goal of 100,000 Children Served, established in 2004, Big Brothers Big Sisters approved a national strategic plan to achieve rapid growth, today serving over 30,000 kids, striving to grow that number to 100,000. Added Macdonald, "We want to continue to challenge the organization to build resources and capacity and find more volunteers because there are lots of kids who need mentors. We're hoping everyone in Canada who needs a mentor, has a mentor. We're hoping for a society that believes in the power of mentoring and the impact of the programs."

"When you think of topical societal issues, like bullying, like academic achievement, good self-esteem, these kids generally aren't bullies, and can stand up for themselves and others, can understand the value of education and apply themselves well in school," Macdonald concluded. "So the ripple effect of a very simple concept is very powerful on the health of communities across Canada and I don't think that can be understated."

http://www.cbj.ca/features/march_11_features/big_brothers_big_sisters_of_canada_quality_volunteer_mentoring.html

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cranbrook | our history



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cranbrook is a non-profit organization and registered charity in operation in Cranbrook since 1977. We began with one program matching "Little Brothers" with "Big Brothers" and have grown to include a variety of community and school based programs both one-to-one and in groups. Our priority remains one-to-one mentoring relationships for boys and girls ages 6 – 16.

In 1990, we expanded our services to begin providing services for girls as well as boys. The **Big Sisters** program is for adult women to be matched with a "Little Sister". As times have changed our programs continue to grow and to meet the needs of our community. We have also grown to support a **Couples for Kids** program, in

2001, where a husband and wife team is matched with a child. We have also grown through our **In School Mentoring**, started in 2001, program, a mentor based program that works in the school system. There has been an increasing need for group programs in our services, so in 2009 we began to run **Go Girls**, aimed at girls 11 – 14 with young women volunteers on a shorter timeline for volunteering.

Benefits of Mentoring | the outcomes

Independent studies show that one-to-one mentoring programs have significant positive effects on children. Of the children who participated in one such study, Big Brothers Big Sisters School-based Mentoring - An Evaluation Summary of Five Pilot Programs:

- ⇒ 64% developed more positive attitudes toward school
- ⇒ 64% developed higher levels of self-confidence
- ⇒ 62% were more likely to trust their teachers
- ⇒ 60% improved relationships with adults
- ⇒ 58% achieved higher grades in social sciences, languages and math
- ⇒ 56% improved relationships with peers
- ⇒ 55% were better able to express their feelings

A 1995 Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters one-to-one mentoring friendships found that Little Brothers and Little Sisters who regularly met with their "Bigs" for one year were:

- ⇒ 46% less likely than their peers to use illegal drugs
- ⇒ 27% less likely to drink alcohol
- ⇒ 52% less likely to skip a whole day of school
- ⇒ 37% less likely to skip a class

The study also reported the youth were more trusting of their parents and guardians, less likely to lie to them, and felt more supported and less criticized by their peers and friends.

Mission | Vision | Values

VISION | Every child in Canada that needs a mentor has a mentor.

MISSION | Promote and support the healthy development of children and facilitate friendships between screened adult volunteers and children through a variety of quality mentoring youth programs.

CORE VALUES |

- ♥ Although committed to the extension of services to as many children as possible, growth will not compromise quality
- ♥ Our programs will be relevant to our clients and to the communities that we serve
- ♥ Our actions are transparent and visible
- ♥ We respect those we serve and every member of our organization's team
- ♥ We value and care for those we serve and those we work with
- ♥ We are honest and open with our clients, with our partners and staff
- ♥ We honour diversity and welcome children and mentors regardless of race, religion, culture or sexual orientation
- ♥ We are accountable to those we serve and to the communities we work in
- ♥ The safety of all our clients and staff is paramount
- ♥ Fun permeates everything we do; we assume this will translate into superior volunteer recruitment and retention.



Board Member Job Description

Function

All Board Members are responsible for determining policies and procedures and for monitoring organizational performance to achieve the mission of the agency.

Primary Responsibilities

- assume a leadership role as required
- establish policies that guide the organization in achieving its mandate
- contribute to the process of establishing strategic direction for the agency
- employ the Executive Director and approve her/his employment contract
- support and participate in evaluating the Executive Director annually
- ensure fiscal stability and financial accountability
- attend and be prepared for Board and other meetings as required
- actively contribute to the functioning of the Board and its sub-committees
- be informed about agency programs and policies
- participate in the evaluation process established by the Board
- ensure that the agency adheres to the National Standards as set out by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada
- review the Board's structure, approve changes and prepare necessary bylaw amendments
- approve agency budget
- assist in developing and maintaining positive relations among the Board, committees, staff and community to enhance the agency mission
- assist in the recruitment of new Board members

For More Information and Resources

National Strategic Plan: <http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/en/Home/AboutUs/annualreport.aspx>

Our website: www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/cranbrook

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