

PRESS RELEASE

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MENTORING AS A PREVENTION TOOL FOR THE COMMUNITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (January 13, 2009) – Big Brothers Big Sisters and other area mentoring groups are celebrating January as **National Mentoring Awareness Month**. Many people understand the benefits mentoring has on an individual child; however, what people do not realize is the benefits mentoring has on our community as a whole.

In 2008, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Jackson received a prevention license for operating a Substance Abuse Program from the Michigan Department of Community Health. BBBS partners with the Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative and other prevention efforts to help make our community better for all. “When a youth is provided with a mentor their self esteem increases, and they are better equipped to make decisions that make a positive impact on their lives, which creates a ripple effect for the community”, says Erica Vogel, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Recent surveys conducted by BBBS of Jackson found that 87% of children in the program had increased self-esteem, 70% were more able to make positive decisions and 80% had a better sense of the future based on their mentoring relationship.

In a national independent study done by Public/Private Ventures, children who are matched with a “Big” are:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol
- 53% less likely to skip school
- 50% more likely to go to all classes
- 33% less likely to hit someone
- more likely to get along better with their teachers and parents

For some children, having a BBBS mentor can provide them with stability they may not otherwise receive. Raising strong kids in our community is a preventative effort, which will ultimately strengthen our community.

Big Brothers Big Sisters will be kicking off a campaign to recruit more mentors in our community. The campaign is called 40+1 and the agency is going to ask the public to step up and volunteer as a mentor, for as little as one hour per week. The agency hopes to beat the 2008 challenge of 40 mentors in 40 days and recruit 40+1 in 40 days. Rhonda Rudolph states, “Mentoring is an excellent way to make a positive impact on a young person’s life. As a big sister, I hope that I can make my little sister feel very special and encourage her to look ahead to the future and set goals that will help her achieve her dreams.”

BBBS will be holding a Mentor Appreciation Luncheon to recognize the tremendous good that mentors in our community do. The luncheon is sponsored by Vista Grande Villa, who is donating time, space and a wonderful lunch. Big Brothers Big Sisters currently supports 99 Jackson area youth in a mentoring relationship, and several kids “on deck” waiting for a “BIG” to share their time and friendship.

More information about:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County, please contact Karen Smith at (517) 784-7181 or e-mail office@bbbsjackson.org. Interested parties can also visit BBBS on-line and sign up to mentor, donate or get involved at www.bbbsjackson.org
- *Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Kelsey Winston at (517) 796-5133 or via email at kwinston@uwjackson.org