

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **MENTORING LOCAL YOUTH MAKES A “BIG” DIFFERENCE**

### **Celebrating January as National Mentoring Month!**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

JACKSON (January 12, 2011) – Please join Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County (BBBSJC), the Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (JCSAPC) and mentoring agencies nationwide in celebrating January 2011 as National Mentoring Month! Many studies have shown mentoring to be an effective strategy in promoting positive community behaviors. A recent national study done by Public/Private Ventures clearly depicts that a child who is matched in a one-to-one mentoring relationship and encouraged by positive opportunities in the community is:

- 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.

Big Brothers Big Sisters provides various evidence-based mentoring programs so that all children in Jackson County have the opportunity to be matched with an ordinary adult who is willing to show them extraordinary care. BBBSJC currently serves 155 youth in active one-to-one mentoring relationships that have statistically proven positive outcomes. 2010 Program Outcome Evaluation (POE) surveys indicate that nearly 80 percent of caregivers questioned witnessed an affirmative change in the self-confidence of their child as a result of having a consistent mentor present in the youth's life.

BBBSJC works with the JCSAPC and other local prevention efforts to make the community a healthy environment for both youth and adults alike. In addition to successful mentoring relationships, BBBSJC provides on-going support and training for youth, mentors and caregivers involved in the program. Throughout the month of January, BBBSJC and JCSAPC will host youth and adult over-the-counter and prescription drug focus groups to gather information about peer abuse in the community. This information will help target future prevention efforts. BBBSJC is also teaming up with the AWARE Shelter (Abused Women's Assistance and Resources) to provide an educational training addressing the topic of sexual abuse and domestic violence. Local teens will also be given the opportunity give back to the community by painting the community-wide used gym at the Salvation Army. The community service opportunity is in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

To recognize the selfless impact of our community's mentors, BBBSJC is hosting a Mentor Appreciation Brunch on January 29, 2011 at Hugo's Bar & Grill. All mentors and community supporters will be invited to share a delightful meal, listen to inspiring speakers and will be encouraged to spread the joy of mentoring to a guest of their own they feel could make a "Big" difference in the life of a young person. Big Brother and Big Sister of the Year will be announced, as well as Community Supporter of the Year.

**More information about:**

*Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Kelsey Haynes at (517) 796-5133 or via email at [khaynes@uwjackson.org](mailto:khaynes@uwjackson.org)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County, please contact the office at (517) 784-7181, via email at [office@bbbsjackson.org](mailto:office@bbbsjackson.org), or on the web at [www.bbbsjackson.org](http://www.bbbsjackson.org)

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