

Vision

All youth achieve their full potential.

Mission

We create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

Youth in our program (Littles), ages 6 and older, are matched with a volunteer mentor (Bigs). Our qualified and specially trained staff create and support the matches to ensure a healthy relationship develops. These relationships contribute to brighter futures and stronger communities. Our mentors don't create potential for the child they are matched with, they just defend the potential that is already there.

Need

According to Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, the single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.

Our program impacts youth by providing them with a mentor that helps them navigate a broad spectrum of risk behaviors and factors including depression and suicide, delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and school dropout.

In a recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 37.6% of high school students in Cascade County reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing usual activities. Over 22% seriously considered suicide. In Lewis and Clark County, the results were 42.3% and 28.9%, respectively.

About 72% of the youth we serve live with a single parent or grandparents, 14% have at least one parent who is incarcerated, 70% qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch, and 57% of households earn less than \$15,000 per year.

Program Outcomes and Evaluation

After being matched for at least one year in our program, our Littles report:

- 85% improved classroom behavior
- 95% increased self-confidence
- 86% improved relationships with their peers
- 82% improved academic performance
- 93% demonstrated more trust
- 89% improved relationships with their family

The impact goes even deeper. Research shows that Littles are 20% more likely to attend college and will earn 15% more over their lifetime compared to their peers without a mentor. Mentoring relationships also help Littles build critical soft skills, like communication, problem-solving, and resilience, that prepare them for success in school, work, and life. Most importantly, our Littles learn to see themselves in futures they might never have thought possible before being matched with a Big.

Program outcomes are evaluated through professional match support and data collection. A baseline survey is done upon enrollment, and follow-up surveys are conducted annually. We also use a Strength of Relationship Survey for mentors and youth after three months and every 12 months thereafter. These tools help us both measure program impact and provide timely support where needed.

Community Program

Our community-based program provides Littles with adult Bigs, and they spend approximately six to eight hours per month together, in a variety of activities to develop pro-social behaviors and broaden their horizons. Matches can go hiking, meet for hot cocoa, bake cookies, or go on other adventures together.

School Program

Our school-based program matches Littles in elementary and middle school with high-school or adult Bigs who meet with them once per week at school, typically during lunchtime. These matches play games, read books, work on schoolwork, or simply talk.

History

BBBS of Helena began in 1967, supporting seven mentoring relationships in its first year, while BBBS of Great Falls began in 1974 thanks to the efforts of two special education counselors. In 2011, we added a School Program in Boulder at the elementary school, utilizing Jefferson High students as Bigs. On July 1, 2015 the separate organizations combined into one agency, BBBS of Helena and Great Falls. This was done to expand the reach beyond current boundaries, serve more children, and save money on affiliation dues, insurance, audits and streamline operations. As an affiliate of BBBS of America since 1992, we follow stringent safety standards and have access to quality network support, resources, and frequently updated staff and volunteer trainings. In 2021, we renamed ourselves BBBS of Central Montana.

Program Cost

Our program is provided at no cost to the families we serve. Through the generosity of a variety of funding sources, including individual donors, corporations, governmental entities, and foundations, we raise the resources necessary to carry out our mission.

Program costs include thorough enrollment and matching processes for volunteers and families. Additionally, professional staff deliver ongoing support for children, families, and volunteers to build and sustain safe, consistent, and positive mentoring relationships. It costs us about \$2,500 to support a match for one year.

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