



Big Brothers Big Sisters Mountain Region Annual Report 2016

Our goal is to give children a better chance at life through professionally supported 1-to-1 mentoring. The relationships we create build social capital for kids, crafting new networks, opening leadership opportunities for our High School Bigs and shining a light on the path to enhanced futures.

We ended 2016 strong, giving more children an extra chance at life than ever before—1,108 matches across ten counties. *That meant we were one of a handful of Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies across the nation to match more kids for four of the past five years.* Though matches grew throughout our service area, the biggest growth occurred in underserved areas, including rural communities and in recently merged Doña Ana County. With a great staff in place we hope to reach even more youth in 2017.

Our 2015 northern/southwestern merger further coalesced in 2016. As hoped, centralizing financial and administrative services allowed us to match more kids in life-changing relationships with caring, committed, carefully screened mentors. Costs went down, resulting in a lower cost per match than in the prior year.

Enhancing Lives through Mentoring: We partner with parents/guardians, volunteers and others in the community and hold ourselves accountable for each child in our program:

- Achieving higher aspirations, greater confidence and better relationships
- Avoiding risky behaviors
- Achieving educational success

Emerging research sheds light on why mentoring works. Studies have shown that severe and pervasive negative experiences during childhood – those that elicit a toxic stress response – impact the developing architecture of the brain and the functioning of the immune system. As a result, when children do not have adequate adult support to help buffer the impact of severe stressors they often later face significant behavioral challenges and health risks as adolescents and adults. Youth mentoring programs play an important role in building resilience in youth – offering hope through promoting healing and building protective factors (“What is toxic stress and why does it matter for youth mentoring programs,” by Venessa Marks, Senior Manager with ICF International’s Family Self-Sufficiency team, and Julie Novak, Vice President of Child Safety, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, blog post, *The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring*, July 25, 2017).

Mentoring programs enhance their success in working with vulnerable children and families by ensuring that programs provide staff, volunteers, and parents opportunities for training that help prepare them to respond appropriately to the cognitive and behavioral challenges often associated with toxic stress. With this in mind, we plan to expand training for staff so they can outreach to volunteers and parents.

Enhanced training will equip mentors to model “soft” skills like grit, self-control, critical thinking, curiosity and resiliency in ways schools and families sometimes can’t. This helps keep kids in school, leading to higher graduation rates, better citizens and stronger communities. The end result: lives changed for the better, forever.

Programs, Initiatives and Achievements: In Community-based Mentoring, caring, committed, carefully screened Bigs spend several hours a week two to four times a month with their Littles for two years or more. In School-based Mentoring, elementary and junior high children meet with adult or high school mentors for an hour a week during the school year on school grounds for a year or more.

In 2016 we offered mentoring services in Rio Arriba, Taos, San Miguel, Mora, McKinley, Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Colfax, Doña Ana, Grant counties. New service areas include the city of Grants (Cibola County) as well as Apache County in Arizona.

As part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Hispanic and Native American Mentoring Initiatives, we helped create the models to better serve Native American, Hispanic and Spanish-speaking volunteers and clients. Our efforts in these areas and others have led to our being recognized as leaders in promoting inclusivity and diversity both locally and nationwide.

Supporting more matches means raising funds to underwrite the cost of those matches. Our Board of Directors rose to the challenge by agreeing to host One Give, a one-time giving event inviting donors to provide gifts of \$10,000 or more. The goal was to ensure that Big Brothers Big Sisters Mountain Region could continue to support vulnerable youth and dramatically increase our much needed services. The response was heartwarming, bringing in \$438,450 in pledges to give. As a thank you, donors were invited to a special dinner at the Santa Fe Opera, featuring a multi-course meal prepared by six renowned chefs from around the country.

One Give pledges, combined with ongoing pledges from our 2012 campaign to raise funds and friends, allowed us to move forward even during a period of financial uncertainty. Many of the children matched were in Zuni, Gallup, Española, Taos, Las Vegas, Mora, Angel Fire, Cimarron, Silver City and Las Cruces—areas where the need is great and services are limited.

We also were able to build our endowment to \$694,649. Once we reach \$1,000,000 we will start to draw from the earnings to support matches. Finally, a gift in memory of Danny O’Neil, allowed us to pay off the mortgage on our Santa Fe building, freeing up funds to match kids instead of making mortgage payments.

We would like to thank our Bigs, families, donors, partners and staff throughout the state. With your help, we hope to give even more northern and southwestern New Mexico children an extra chance at life in 2016.

Alan Overton, Board President

Andrea Fisher Maril, CEO