

Protect our children, support big futures

Written by Sarah Piano BBBS Senior Director of Northern NM
Friday, 06 May 2022 05:30



As we reach the end of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, or as Utah and Montana are now calling it—Family Strengthening Month— we reflect on all the drastic world changes in modern times and how this tumultuous whirlwind is affecting the lives of our children.

Over the past two years young people's lives have been dramatically altered by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely in time largely spent at home in isolation and disconnected from schools, friends, family, and their community. Considering that New Mexico ranks next to last in the nation in child well being, the pandemic has exacerbated existing levels of anxiety, stress, and trauma already experienced by many children and families in our community.

Heightened levels of economic instability, food insecurity, job-loss, social isolation, illness, and grief have had a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of our children and families. This makes parenting more challenging, and leaves our children more vulnerable to the threats of abuse and neglect.

Mentoring is one way to help create a safe, supportive, and positive developmental eco-system that gives our youth space to cope and grow. It is imperative that our communities come together to reconnect children and families to the resources, services, and opportunities we all need to thrive.

Mentors work alongside parents as role models. They reassure children that there is someone outside of the family who cares about their potential, makes them feel that they matter, shares their interests, and guides them in dealing with life's challenges. Research confirms that quality mentoring relationships have powerfully positive effects on young people academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Mentoring relationships can happen organically. But studies suggest that one in three young people will grow up without a positive adult mentor, and the relationship deficit is growing across too many communities. This past year alone, 20% of the young people served by Big Brothers Big Sisters reported losing contact with an important adult in their life.

Imagine the difference we would make if tens of thousands of New Mexico adults stepped forward to make sure that every child in our communities had a mentor? Every New Mexico child could be supported to find their path in life, contribute positively to our community, and pay it forward as mentors to the next generation.

We need you to help make this happen. Sign up to be a “Big” (mentor) through Big Brothers Big Sisters or any number of youth service organizations that are in drastic need of your help. It’s fun, rewarding, and easier than you think.

Big Brothers Big Sisters offers numerous ways for you to get involved as a mentor, including through our Outdoor Mentoring program which provides fun opportunities to mentor a child while participating in outdoor activities together. Activities may include group hikes, visits to the park, fishing, scavenger hunts, picnics, and more. Our team supports Bigs and Littles on their outdoor adventures and relationship journeys.

The best part? You don’t have to be perfect to make a difference— just be you.

Visit www.bbbsmountainregion.org to learn more and sign up today.

By Sarah Piano
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