



It Takes A Village: William Salcedo & Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey

By Jillian McCarthy | January 3rd, 2023 | Current Cover Story, Monmouth County

FEATURED PHOTO: William Salcedo, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey | **CREDIT:** JS Photo

Over the years, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey has grown to make a lasting impact in the lives of over 1,400 children in 10 New Jersey counties.

When William Salcedo took over as Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey in 2008, the organization was only serving about 100 children in Monmouth County. The agency had a budget deficit, jeopardizing the much-needed mentoring programs it provides for local youth. William brought the organization to profitability within 12 months and, in 2011, expanded services to youth in Middlesex County as well. Now, nearly 15 years later, the Coastal & Northern New Jersey agency is one of the largest Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations in the country, currently serving more than 1,400 youth in 10 New Jersey counties.



PHOTO: Distributing back to school backpacks |
Courtesy of BBBSCNNJ



PHOTO: William Salcedo with students at a school program |
Courtesy of BBBSCNNJ

William, a United States Navy veteran, has strengthened the agency by leading by example and instilling a commitment to the children and families served, as well as implementing a youth empowerment model for all leaders, team members and volunteers. William has 14 years of experience and knowledge in preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency and violence, promoting positive youth development, strengthening families, and understanding the effects of adverse childhood experiences and the benefits of positive ones.

William and the organization work closely with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America to administer prevention and diversion programs for youth in New Jersey. Under his leadership, the organization has become a leader in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Federation. Whether it's a mentor and a child sharing a slice of pizza, shooting hoops, or taking a walk in the park, William believes in the power of fostering one-on-one interactions with youth to help positively shape their future.

CM: Talk about the impact BBBS has made through mentorship.

William: It takes a village to raise a child. Growing up, we all had individuals that really shaped our views, our thoughts, and where we're at today. Mentoring offers children support to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. Through our evidence-based mentoring model, children can combat the effects of adverse childhood experiences. This increases the likelihood that they will achieve success in school, avoid risky and delinquent behaviors, and improve their self-confidence and socio-emotional health.

CM: In the context of January being National Mentoring Month, how crucial is the work being done at BBBS in serving our community?

William: The youth we serve have been affected by a global pandemic, widespread financial insecurity, the racial justice movement in America, violence in places they hold most dear, and feelings of isolation and anxiety that have hit young people the hardest. Amid this wave of challenges and uncertainty, mentoring remains a powerful force for positive change. Heading into a new year, we're focused on being an organization that empowers every young person on a path to graduate high school with a plan for their future and a mentor whose impact will last a lifetime.



PHOTO: William Salcedo mentoring students |
Courtesy of BBBSCNNJ



PHOTO: William Salcedo with Big & Little of the Year 2022 |
Credit JS Photo

CM: Do you have any stories that have made an impact on you personally that you can share?

William: Honestly, I have hundreds of stories that have made me so proud of our agency’s efforts. For example, kids who came to us at eight years old facing many obstacles are now 18 years old and credit their Big with helping them realize their dream of going to college. One of our Littles has lived with his aunt for the last several years due to his biological parents struggling with substance abuse. He calls his aunt “Mom” and recently was officially adopted by her and now shares her last name. His Big Brother attended the final court hearing and was a part of his adoption celebration. They contacted their BBBS case manager to share the news and were overflowing with joy on the phone.

CM: What is something that you think people may not know but should about BBBS/Mentoring?

William: Volunteering as a mentor for as little as four hours a month may change the course of a child’s life. These intentional relationships allow a sense of belonging and inclusion that promote life-changing outcomes.

Our agency currently has 100 children waiting for a mentor of their own. And it takes very little to be a Big. With just 4-6 hours a month and a free or low-cost activity, Bigs introduce their Littles to new interests, help them to develop new skills, and create new experiences outside of the child’s own family and neighborhood.

CM: Our audience encompasses the Monmouth County communities of Colts Neck, Holmdel, Lincroft, Rumson, Fair Haven, Little Silver, Red Bank, Locust, and Sea Bright. One might presume that many people think that BBBS is not needed/relevant in these communities. What would you say to that?

William: Our agency engaged 1,830 youth in 2022 and 559 of them reside in Monmouth County. Just because a child may not be living in poverty does not mean that they don’t need a positive role model or have not had exposure to adverse childhood experiences. They may have experienced bullying, have parents who are divorced, lack self-confidence, or have behavioral

diagnoses or special needs. But honestly, these are just the surface problems. Every child that comes through our door lives with issues such as these and a host of personal challenges that they don't have the maturity or coping skills to overcome on their own.

CM: How can people get involved? What is the greatest need?

William: Volunteer to be a Big! Go to www.mentornj.org. After filling out a quick questionnaire, a case manager will contact you within 24-48 hours and go over the intake process and qualifications. The process takes about two months because Bigs go through a thorough intake process that includes background checks, interviews, and training before they get paired with a child. But that's not the only way to get involved! Visit our website for other volunteer opportunities or ways to support.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey serves youth ages 6 to 18 years old in Bergen, Passaic, Sussex, Warren, Morris, Hunterdon, Somerset, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean Counties.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer and helping to shape a child's future, visit mentornj.org/be-a-big.

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