

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024



LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As National Mentoring Month comes to a close, our focus remains on serving more children through one-to-one mentoring. In order to expand our reach and help more local youth we need...YOU.

Right now, we have more than 140 kids on our waiting list who want a mentor. The commitment is a few hours of your time and attention each month and our team is there to support you, and your Little, along the way.

The impact on a child's life is life-changing.

But you don't have to take my word for it. In this newsletter we're excited to announce our **2024 Bigs & Littles of the Year**. I hope you will take a few minutes to read their stories that exemplify what it means to be a Big and provide a glimpse of the impact that mentoring has on our youth.

We look forward to celebrating these, and all of our wonderful matches, throughout the year.

Sincerely,

William Salcedo
Executive Director

FIRST MATCH OF 2024!



Little Brother Zach & Big Brother Mike were our first match made this year! They both were a little nervous and quiet but by the end of the match meeting they found many common interests like basketball, pizza and running. Zach even joked about being able to eat a whole pizza pie then Mike shared he can too! So naturally, they'll be getting pizza for their first outing!



Bowl For Kids' Sake is about having fun while supporting Big Brothers Big Sisters. Create a team, raise funds, then celebrate your success with us at the lanes!

LEARN MORE & REGISTER HERE:
www.mentornj.org/bowl

Our **MISSION PARTNERS** support the fundraising efforts, mission, and vision of BBBSCNNJ throughout the year.



2024 BIGS & LITTLES OF THE YEAR

COMMUNITY-BASED MATCHES OF THE YEAR

Big Sister Jenica & Little Sister Megan

Big Sister Jenica has been an incredible support and constant, positive presence for Little Sister Megan over the last 7+ years. They rarely miss a bi-weekly outing and they've enjoyed so many fun activities together, from their beloved yearly traditions to stepping out of their comfort zone together trying new things as often as possible. Not only has their friendship grown since being matched in 2015 but Megan has also grown as an individual with Jenica's support, encouragement, and optimism. When they first met, Megan was a shy, nervous 10-year-old and now she is thriving academically, socially, and athletically in her Senior Year of high school. She recently committed to Gardner Webb University where she will continue her track and cross-country career as a Division 1 athlete. She looks forward to filling a leadership role on her future team and credits Jenica with helping her build the confidence to both lead her peers and pursue her dreams. With being a Big Sister comes many other roles that Jenica has perfected over the years- a listening ear, a safe space, a cheerleader, an adventure buddy, and so much more. She cannot wait to stand by Megan as she enters this next chapter at GWU. We can say with 100% confidence, this is a match made for life.



Big Brother David & Little Brother Dominic



Big Brother David and Little Brother Dominic have built a strong friendship since being matched over 9 years ago. The foundation of their friendship has been unconditional support from David and a well-founded trust from Dominic. David has always turned towards the moments where he could be a support to Dominic and has never shied away from a difficult conversation that could provide a meaningful teaching moment in Dominic's life. At the same time, David has woven an atmosphere of fun and friendly levity that fills their time together, even when tackling some of the more challenging trial-and-error aspects of the teenage years. David has continually emphasized Dominic's potential and ability, helping him to discover himself and the person he wants to be. David truly embodies what it means to be a Big Brother – someone who has allowed the ordinary, small, everyday moments to build into something profound.

2024 BIGS & LITTLES OF THE YEAR

HIGH SCHOOL BIGS OF THE YEAR

Big Sister Leilaah Gomez | Bergenfield High School

Despite this being Big Sister Leilaah's first year as a big, she has been a familiar face at Big Brothers Big Sisters for quite some time. She has been a Little in our Bergenfield programs and is currently a Little in our Community-Based program. After experiencing the impact as a Little, she chose to become a mentor herself. Since our new Bergenfield High School + Roy W. Brown Middle School program launched this year, Leilaah has attended every session. She is reliable, kind, outgoing, and always arrives at the program with a smile. Her willingness to help is evident whether she is guiding her Little or assisting the team with cleaning up. Her contribution to this program has been invaluable. It is obvious that she takes great pride in being a Big Sister and we are grateful for her enthusiasm and motivation to be a part of this program.

Big Brother Divine Hare | Keansburg High School

Big Brother Divine is an active community member and student at Keansburg High School. Keansburg mentoring program kicked off as a new program in 2022-2023 and Divine was excited from the start. Divine volunteered at a recruitment table for Back-to-School Night to help spread the word, told all his friends to sign up for this new program during lunch, and since launching he's never missed a session. Divine has been matched with his Little Javon for these sessions. When his Little reenrolled in the program he requested to be rematched with Divine which speaks volumes to the bond they have established. The two have formed a wonderful trusting friendship where Javon shared, he can ask Divine advice on anything with confidence. Divine is an outstanding role model for Javon, giving back to his community and younger generations.

WORKPLACE BIGS OF THE YEAR

Big Sister Gina Figliuolo | Morris County Bigs in Blue

Big Sister Gina has served as a liaison and a mentor for our Bigs in Blue program since 2019. She happily took on a double match this year, mentoring two Little Sisters, and always demonstrates the many aspects of being an officer effortlessly to all Littles in the program. Gina is always willing to help with an activity or demonstration and always brings smiles and laughter to her Littles. We are very fortunate to have such a wonderful supporter, who is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of young children.

Big Brother Dr. Michael Dyce | Monmouth Medical Center

Big Brother Dr. Michael Dyce has volunteered as a mentor in the Monmouth Medical Center Program mentoring Long Branch High School students since 2018. Dr. Dyce is an Emergency Medicine Physician at Monmouth Medical Center, and despite a busy schedule, he has still managed to attend every session. He will often attend our sessions at the hospital on his day off! Dr. Dyce has not only been an incredible mentor and teacher of the medical field to his individual mentees over the past 6 years but often provides useful tools and shared experience with the entire group. In his first year, Dr. Dyce was matched with Little Brother Amir. Amir was very interested in the medical field and was ecstatic to be paired with a physician. Dr. Dyce shared his wisdom with Amir and provided helpful support to him as he figured out his next steps post high school. Today, Amir is working at the same hospital as Dr. Dyce while pursuing his own career in medicine. Dr. Dyce continues to be a support and listening ear to each Long Branch High School student he meets. It is an honor to provide Dr. Dyce with this well-deserved award to show our appreciation.



The BIG Wait

Tristan is a sweet and conscientious 5th grader who loves school. He also loves football, basketball and other sports as well as playing strategy games like chess and Risk. He's part of the 4H Club and won *Champion Goat Junior Showman* this past summer at the local county fair. Another unique thing about him is he participated in a school program where you create a business and then sell its products at an expo. Tristan's product was soap made out of goats' milk, and it was so successful he sold out! He is most looking forward to tossing a football around or spending time outdoors hiking and kayaking with his future Big.

Volunteer with us today, you will be making a BIG difference in the life of a Little.



**IT TAKES
LITTLE
TO BE BIG**



SNAPSHOTS FROM OUR PROGRAMS



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO OUR JANUARY MATCHES!

- 11 years
Big Sister Diane & Little Sister Alexis
- 7 years
Big Brother Taimoor & Little Brother Julien
Big Sister Lauren & Little Sister Jocelyn
- 6 years
Big Brother Robert & Little Brother Jose
- 5 years
Big Brother Rudy & Little Brother Adien
- 4 years
Big Sister Tiffany & Little Sister Adrianna
- 2 years
Big Sister Jennifer & Little Brother Benjamin
Big Sister Elyse & Little Sister Sha'Nylah
Big Brother Joseph & Little Brother Jaden
- 1 year
Big Brother Kirill & Little Brother James
Big Brother Jeff & Little Brother Anthony
Big Sister Julia & Little Sister Roslyn
Big Sister Rachell & Little Sister Emily
Big Sister Nancy & Little Sister Samantha

