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DEFENDING POTENTIAL

⇒ SAVE THE DATES! ⇐



Bowling theme: **Famous Duos!**
Sign up online: bbbs-helena.org

**Dueling Pianos
Nightclub Bash**

February 29, 2020

Best Western Premier
Great Northern Hotel
in Helena

**Tickets on sale
December 1st!**



BOWL For Kids' Sake

Helena—January 24-26, 2020
Great Falls—February 22-23, 2020



NEWSLETTER



Challenges and Rewards – we are **Defenders of Potential!**

Every year brings challenges and rewards, but the past two years at Big Brothers Big Sisters have been different.

Challenge: Just two years ago we found ourselves in a financial hole when state and federal funding was cut without warning. We made the heartbreaking decisions to cut programs and staff to stave off disaster. You helped us raise the emergency funds we needed to keep operating.

Reward: You responded to our plea for help. We survived and we continue as Defenders of Potential for kids in our area. Surveys demonstrate after being matched with a mentor for 12 months,

- 95% of kids increase their self-confidence
- 88% improve their classroom participation
- 89% feel more equipped to avoid substance abuse
- 89% improve their relationships with family

Reward: I am happy to let you know that after a year of reductions, we have recovered enough to expand. We will bring back the high school program and we will be able to expand the community programs in Helena and Great Falls.

We cannot do it without your help. Your response to our call for help is why we are able to expand the programs again.

Let me share my own story. I too am a Big Brother – or more correctly, was a Big Brother. My Little Brother graduated high school, which is the formal end of the program. It is not the end of our relationship, I have a friend for life.

When we first got matched, my Little Brother missed a lot of school, always with one excuse or another. Fast forward a few years and my Little Brother, my friend, is the **FIRST PERSON IN HIS FAMILY TO GRADUATE**

FROM HIGH SCHOOL. And, he had good grades! I cannot tell you how proud of him I am. He has a future and he has goals now. **Just by being an adult friend, we are Defenders of Potential.**

BBBS mentors help every kid reach for **their** stars. My Little Brother has already gone far and he finds out every day how much farther he can go.

Sometimes just showing up makes a difference. We all make a difference when we volunteer or contribute to BBBS.

Our Biggest Challenge? This year's challenge is much more personal than any we have faced before. Our leader, and number one mentor, BBBS CEO Colleen Brady, started the year battling breast cancer. Her fight lifts all of us. We learned in September her cancer has metastasized to her brain. She continues to fight and we do not know what the result will be. Her spirit is as keen as ever and no matter the outcome, she, and we, will never give up the fight for kids to reach their potential.

We Need Your Help for the Next Reward: When you consider all of the issues we face, please keep **DEFENDING POTENTIAL** for kids in our area in mind. **Your donation of time or money makes a difference for us to make a difference for kids.**

If you can't volunteer, we need your financial support for the professionals who work to support the kids, parents and volunteers. Child safety is, and will always be, our number one priority. Contact our office at 442-7479 or bbbs@bbbs-helena.org, or make a donation online or through the mail. Every little bit makes a difference; You make a difference to **Defend Potential** for kids.

Thank you. Please keep us in your thoughts.

Peter Strauss, Board Chair



Our Staff & New Office

After a busy summer, we have finally settled into our new office located in a building we share with several other non-profits. Our address is **1434 N Roberts St** and we hope you will stop by! From left to right we are:

Marci Williams, Recruitment & Enrollment Specialist, moved from development into her true love—making matches! She is an expert as she has been a Big for three Littles. She has three grown sons with husband Derek, and one very spoiled black lab. Give her a call if you want to become a Big!

Mike Buchanan, Program Director, directs all programs and writes many of our grants. He is also in charge of our High School Bigs Program and our outdoor events. Mike has two children with his wife Amber and they enjoy all things Star Wars, Harry Potter, and music.

Claire O'Connell, Office Manager & Events Coordinator, manages many of our communications, donors, office needs, and can often answer your questions. She has two girls with her husband John and likes to read, hike, create art, and organize.

Carol Carpenter, Match Support Specialist, calls and supports our Matches. She is highly qualified, after spending 28 years with the State in the DPHHS. She and husband Marvin just became first time grandparents—ask her for photos! Carol and Marvin were a Big Couple to a boy 30 years ago and still remain in contact with the Little, his wife and family.

Colleen Brady, President & CEO, is in charge of our program in Helena, Great Falls, and Boulder. She has worked as a Principal and in banking. She has one cute (and speedy) dog and loves to travel.



Dave Hecker, Match Support Specialist, is based in Great Falls. He will be interviewing matches and working to grow our program there. Dave taught in Browning for 26 years before joining our staff. He and his wife Meredith split their time between Great Falls and Three Forks. Give him a call if you want to become a Big in Great Falls!

Kelly McDermott, (pictured left) Development Director, just joined our staff. She will run events in Helena and Great Falls and head our fundraising and development efforts. Kelly recently moved to York after her husband Shane retired from the military. They have a teenage son and crazy Weimaraner. Outside the office, you'll find her hiking the trails, paddle-boarding, or crafting her way through the winter months.



Thank You, Memorials, Shout Outs:

- **Thank you** to all those who joined us for Wine Crush, Golf Fore Kids' Sake, Boulder Black & White Party, and Bowl For Kids' Sake in Helena, Great Falls, or Boulder. Our ability to help all youth achieve their full potential depends on your extreme generosity and support!
- **Congratulations** to our Littles who graduated high school in the spring and to those who are graduating this winter. Way to go, Braydon, Isaiah, JT, LeighAnne, and Saige! Congratulations, also, to our Bigs from Carroll College, Jenna and Mikaela! Your hard work has paid off, and we wish you the best!
- **We remember** supporters who passed away this year: Judy Pepper, a longtime Big in our School Based Program, and Kelly Moorse, a cherished donor and friend.



Program Activities

MATCH STORY: Cruz, Kathie, and Neal

Cruz was matched as a "Little" with "Big" Couple Neal Blossom and Kathie Roos on May 6, 2018. We anticipate they will be a long-term match due to the fun they have together and their goals for the future. Cruz's mom, Trisha, states "Having two Bigs for Cruz has been a blessing since so many people get busy and sometimes our lives seem to take a higher priority at times. It has helped Cruz with his schooling, sports and being more confident in himself." Kathie and Neal state "We both spend the bulk of the time with Cruz, but often we take turns picking up or taking Cruz home. Also, even if one of us is out of town or otherwise busy, at least one of us is almost always able to spend time with Cruz weekly." Kathie indicated one of their goals for 2020 is to go to Lincoln to "Visit the Sculpture in the Wild and the Lake." Cruz is also looking forward to "an out of town outing." Perhaps this outing can occur as part of their two-year anniversary celebration in May. When asked why the BBBS program is important in Helena, Neal and Kathie stated, "The program in Helena provides much needed one-on-one (or one-on-couple) time in this fast paced world, computer/phone dominated society of ours. This time not only provides personal mentorship to a young person, it provides an opportunity for Bigs to give back, support parent(s) and teachers, and experience the world from a different view." We at BBBS are certainly blessed to have Cruz, Kathie and Neal in our program. Last year Cruz delighted attendees at the BBBS Christmas party at Kleffner Ranch by sharing his creative cookie decorating skills. Other favorite activities they enjoyed include: decorating gingerbread houses, flying a paper airplane at the Pack the Place In Pink event at Capital High School, playing board games, kayaking at Spring Meadow Lake, carving pumpkins, walking with the dogs, and having debates among the three of them. A huge shout out goes to his mom for her wisdom in enrolling him. Thank you all!!



Match Activities: Halloween, Missouri River Rafting, The Big Read



Bigs in Blue is a one-to-one mentoring program that connects youth with police in communities throughout our nation, building strong, trusting, lasting relationships.



We currently have grant funding for this program and need your help to **recruit five more law enforcement personnel or other first responders** to serve as Big Brothers and Big Sisters!