

## Big Brothers Big Sisters of NE Wisconsin Provides Positive Role Models

It is exciting to see when children are positively influenced by supportive role models, such as the people who volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeastern Wisconsin. BBBS of NE Wisconsin is providing a measurable and positive impact in several Wisconsin communities through its matches of adult mentors in Door, Brown, Oconto, Marinette, and Keweenaw counties with disadvantaged youth ages 7-13. Most of these kids come from single parent homes; 78% belong to families earning \$25,000 per year and under. Having an additional caring adult in their lives helps these kids in measurable ways and prepares them for a successful life. For instance, kids who have a BBBS mentor are 52% more likely to stay in school and 75% more likely to earn a four year degree than their peers.

Once they graduate from the program, many “Littles,” as BBBS kids are affectionately called, go on to volunteer and/or hold leadership roles in the community. One former “Little,” Marie, explains, “Being a part of Big Brothers Big Sisters has been an experience I will never forget...(One day) I hope to be just as good of a role model for someone else like Jennifer has been for me.”

The program is also highly rewarding to “Bigs” (adult mentors), many of whom feel they receive more from the experience than they give. As “Big” LaReina Tipping puts it, “When I look at my time over the last five and a half years with my Little Sister, Alona, I see that it has been a reflective, genuine, adventurous, and unique experience. I am so proud and thankful to have Alona in my life.”

BBBS’s innovative new REACH (Recreation, Education, Arts, Civic, Health) program offers fun activities for kids and mentors to attend together. For example, the organization secured free tickets for the kids to attend the Green Bay Symphony and have an audience with one of the professional violinists, who explained what it was like to work in the symphony.

Other past events include attending a Bullfrogs baseball game and getting a peek at the ballpark “behind the scenes;” going ice fishing and learning about the world of pro fishing guides; and attending events at St. Norbert’s College and UW Green Bay.

“We select events appropriate to the different age groups. Some of the older matches look at college and career types of things,” explains Todd McPeck, Executive Director of BBBS of NE Wisconsin. “The idea is not just to entertain kids. I want to open their world up so they can dream bigger. (The Sonnentag Foundation and) County Materials has been very, very supportive about this project.”

For more information on Big Brothers Big Sisters of NE Wisconsin, visit <http://www.bbbsnew.org>.