

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Big Brothers Big Sisters Awarded New Military Mentoring Contract

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN has just been awarded a **\$122,500** contract from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to focus on providing services to youth of military families. This contract will provide funding through 2013 for the support of 70 new mentoring relationships between adult mentors and youth who have active-duty military parent(s), or a parent who is or may be deployed facing deployment. While Big Brothers Big Sisters has been serving youth of military families for years, the contract will allow more youth to be served, and will specifically focus on recruiting volunteers who have a connection with and/or understanding of military life.

Wade and Sue Bastian reflect on the impact a Big Brother had on their son during the time of Wade's deployment.

"We can't say enough about the Big Brother that our son was matched with in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program during my two-year deployment to Iraq from 2005-2007. Our son still talks about how great it was to have someone to do activities and talk with while I was away. It wasn't the same as me being there with him, but his Big Brother, Stan, cushioned the impact of me being away and in harms way. Our family is extremely grateful to Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Foley School that supports the program, and especially to Stan, the high school volunteer mentor that took time away from his school day to make a "BIG" lifelong, positive impact in our son's days spent away from his Dad."

While only the 21st most populous state in the nation, Minnesota is 5th in the nation in number of service people. This high population of military involvement demonstrates the need for positive mentoring relationships to support the youth impacted, and also indicates a wealth of military oriented individuals who would make excellent, compassionate, empathetic mentors. Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks to bring these two populations together to provide a rich experience for all parties involved, and to support these mentoring relationships with a professionally degreed and trained staff member who is familiar with and passionate about working with military families.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN has been rapidly establishing relationships throughout the military community with such organizations as: Camp Ripley's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, Regional Inter-Service Family Assistance Center, Central Minnesota Warrior to Citizen, Operation Military Kids, University of MN Extension

Educator Volunteer & Partnership Development, and Veterans on Campus at St. Cloud State University. These partnerships will provide information and support for staff, mentors, and youth involved in the program to allow for successful mentoring relationships to be developed.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota was established in 1969 and helps youth to realize their full potential by providing positive growth experiences through one-to-one mentoring relationships. To learn how you can be the difference in the life of a child, as a mentor, volunteer, or donor, please call 320. 253.1616 or visit www.bbbscentralmn.org.

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If you would like more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN, please contact Jackie at (320) 253-1616 or email Jackie at jjohnson@bbbscentralmn.org.