



 **Big Brothers Big Sisters.**  
OF ORANGE COUNTY & THE INLAND EMPIRE

# PARENT NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2024

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE BBBS TEAM

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Happy New Year, BBBS families! As we step into 2024, I extend a warm and enthusiastic welcome to each member of our incredible Big Brothers Big Sisters community. The start of a new year is not just a change in the calendar; it's an opportunity to reflect on our journey, celebrate achievements, and look forward to the exciting possibilities that lie ahead.

Over the past two years, your dedication and participation have been the driving force behind our shared success. Together, we've created a space where families connect, grow, and thrive. As we bid farewell to the past and step into the present, we are thrilled to unveil and put into action some of the initiatives that we've been working on, carefully crafted with your input in mind.

2024 is a year of elevation for us—a time to build upon the solid groundwork we've laid and reach new heights. We are eager to roll out fresh initiatives that will not only enhance the impact of our program but also contribute to the continued growth of our community. Your unwavering support has been pivotal in getting us to this point, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each one of you.

As we embark on this new phase, I invite you to join us in celebrating the accomplishments of the past, embracing the opportunities of the present, and anticipating the exciting journey that lies ahead. This newsletter will remain your go-to source for staying informed about current events and learning how to actively participate. Stay tuned for up-to-date information on what's happening in our community! Thank you for playing an integral part in our BBBS family, and here's to a year filled with growth, togetherness, and shared triumphs.

In partnership,



*Jessica González*

Family Engagement Manager  
[jgonzalez@ocbigs.org](mailto:jgonzalez@ocbigs.org)



To stay up on the latest news and updates for parents and guardians, visit [ocbigs.org/parent-news](https://ocbigs.org/parent-news)

# UPCOMING BBBS EVENTS



## Cash for College Workshop

[CLICK HERE TO RSVP](#)

Saturday, February 10, 2024 | 10 AM - 11:30 AM | BBBS OC Office

1801 E Edinger Ave, Santa Ana, CA 92705

### FOR BBBS MENTEES AND PARENTS

At this interactive workshop, BBBS college bound students and their parents will discover the secrets to securing scholarships, grants, and financial aid. We'll also walk participants through the 2024-2025 FAFSA application!



### MEET CHRISTINA | COLLEGE & CAREER RESOURCE SPECIALIST

Christina Sundermeier has provided career counseling for students and clients for seven years, and now she can't wait to help our Littles with post-grad planning! As the College and Career Resource Specialist at Big Brothers Big Sisters, Christina will be hosting regular workshops and events for Littles and their Bigs and parents. She will also provide individual College and Career counseling services, such as:

- Personalized 1:1 appointments
- Career exploration
- Job/Internship search
- Resume review and interview preparation
- Financial aid/scholarship support
- College planning and application assistance
- Networking and LinkedIn coaching
- Connection with community resources

**Looking for College and Career guidance for your child?** Contact your Match Support Specialist to book an appointment with Christina!



# BBBS PARENT SPOTLIGHT

In this edition of our Parent Newsletter, we're turning the spotlight on our fantastic BBBS parents and guardians who've been dedicated attendees at our Family Engagement events and trainings this past year. Their commitment to fostering a positive experience in our program for their child is truly commendable.



"I try to attend all the events that BBBS offers since I am unaware of many of the issues that are happening at the moment with youth regarding the safety of social networks, drugs, and mental health. Having information about these topics from the sessions I have attended has helped me have better open communication with my children."

- Martha



"We attend these trainings because we see the conflicts that exist today, and our daughters are growing and we want to guide them in the best way. We have acquired tools of great wisdom and how to apply them. The impact has been positive because we have realized that there are communities like BBBS that support us and provide resources to prevent family crises."

- Nora and Jose



"I attend because I want to be able to help my son and to be able to tell if something is going on with him. I have gained a lot of knowledge by attending the classes. I want my son to be aware of the danger that's out there, so that he can make a better choice in his life."

- Youdeline



"We attend the trainings with the aim of learning to understand my daughter more. She tells me how she feels and many of her worries now thanks to BBBS. I think I have earned her trust, and this has had a favorable impact on our lives."

- Maria



"My husband and I attend these trainings because we think it is really beneficial for our family. Educating ourselves about the current problems of youth has helped us understand, help, and support our son for his personal development. Thanks to BBBS, we have made important progress in our son's personal relationships and education."

- Marisol



"[At the trainings] I receive information that I do not know, and if I have doubts, the presenters are able to clarify them for me. I find information and implement tools for my children, and it helps us as parents to know how to be more attentive to them and, most importantly, to know how to listen to them."

- Guillermina and Jose



"I've gained an open and trusting relationship with my children. We walk out of the trainings sharing what we've learned and what we thought about the topic. Now they know their mom is very involved in their life, education and well-being, and if I as a parent can't help, I can reach out and find out how I can help them or where to take them."

**It's okay to ask for help when needed."**

- Gabriela

**STRENGTHEN MATCH CONNECTIONS • EMPOWER YOUR CHILD • CONNECT WITH OTHER PARENTS**

**Your involvement matters.** Join our next event and become an active participant in your child's mentoring journey! Let's create a community where every child has a positive experience with the support of informed and engaged parents.

# FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAM PARENTS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Your Match Support Team extends its warm wishes for a Happy New Year to you all! We are excited about continuing to provide support and fostering connections with each of you. We want to take this time to showcase two amazing MSS team members: **Elsie Reynoso**, who recently joined our OC Match Support team after transferring from our Inland Empire team, and **Janet Mateo**, who will be celebrating her remarkable 10-year anniversary with our agency in April. Get to know Elsie and Janet in our Q&A below!



*Katie Esparza*

Match Engagement & Enrichment Manager

[kesparza@ocbigs.org](mailto:kesparza@ocbigs.org)



## Q&A WITH ELSIE AND JANET FEATURED MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALISTS



**What do you enjoy most about your job, and how do you approach working with our BBBS families?**

**Janet:** The most fulfilling and rewarding aspect of my job is building rapport and trust with parents and guardians. Talking to them and learning about their family history and who they are as individuals allows me to cater to their needs and aspirations for their children's matches.

**Elsie:** What I most enjoy about my job is being able to see Littles grow and become more confident, as well as seeing Bigs be able to be kids again! Since I am a Big too, I love being able to relate to other matches in the program who have had similar experiences to my Little and me. It also means a lot to me when parents open up and share more about their lives, whether that be a funny story that happened or something personal about themselves. I am ready to listen and support them in whichever way I can.

**What is your favorite memory you've made working with Big Brothers Big Sisters?**

**Janet:** My favorite memory is from a few years ago when a handful of our graduates gave speeches of appreciation at our Bright Futures Brunch. It was a heartwarming experience to see and hear Littles share about their evolving relationships with their Bigs and how grateful they felt to have met them.

**Elsie:** My favorite memory I've made working with Big Brothers Big Sisters is helping host a Match Event at the Sale Ranch Animal Sanctuary, where Bigs and Littles were able to tour the farm. Kids and grown ups alike were so excited about seeing rescued horses, sheep, goats, and many other animals! It was great to see so many matches push themselves out of their comfort zone and spend time with animals they might have been hesitant to touch.

# FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIGS PARENTS

Throughout the year, we highly encourage our parents to stay engaged by asking your student about their experience in the High School Bigs program. Your involvement plays a significant role in the success of your child's mentorship journey, and we hope you'll be able to join us at your child's upcoming Open House!

## YOU'RE INVITED!

FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 1

OPEN  
HOUSE  
WEEK



Step into the world of High School Bigs and witness the laughter, learning, and connection that defines mentorship. At your school's BBBS Open House, you'll be able to meet your child's mentor and see how they interact during a meaningful activity.

Snacks and refreshments will be provided, and all attendees will be entered into a \$25 gift card raffle! More info to come from your Program Specialist.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2024 MENTORS OF THE YEAR



**Ana Galvez**, Buena Park High School x Raymond Elementary  
**Alexander Dao**, Oxford Academy x Holder Elementary



Ana and her Little, Evelyn



Alex and his Little, Bronson

Both Ana and Alex will receive the **\$2,500 Angelitos Award** to fund their college and career goals, thanks to Angelitos de Oro.

### PERSONAL SAFETY RULES

At BBBS, safety is our number one priority. Here are some of the site rules your child must follow:

- **Respectful Behavior:** Students are expected to show respect to their Bigs, peers, Program Specialist, and the material at all times.
- **No Exchange of Contact Info:** For the safety of all participants, students are strictly prohibited from exchanging personal contact info with their Big, such as phone numbers or social media profiles.
- Additionally, **meeting outside of the supervised mentoring sessions is NOT permitted.**

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Throughout the year, your child and their Big will work on a Youth Outcome Development Plan (YODP) to help achieve their goals.

Our proven curriculum includes activities that focus on:

- Increasing confidence
- Building social skills
- Learning self-regulation
- Future planning and exploration
- Creating stronger relationships

### ACTIVITIES

Each week, your child and their Big will work on academics and participate in SEL activities, such as:

- **All About Me:** Bigs and Littles will engage in personal reflection, expression, and love by completing a worksheet about promotes self-awareness and a positive self-image.
- **Slime:** Matches explore their creativity and enjoy sensory play through everyone's favorite, slime!
- **Career Day:** Matches will explore different types of exciting career possibilities for their future.

High School Bigs is a peer-to-peer mentoring program that connects your child (Little) with a high school student (Big) who serves as their friend and role model. Matches meet once a week after school at the elementary school. During this session, facilitated by a Big Brothers Big Sisters Program Specialist, matches spend time working on academics, building social and personal skills, and developing a friendship.



# COMMUNITY RESOURCES



## Tax Preparation - Tax Deadline: April 15, 2024

OC Free Tax prep is part of OC United Way's United for Financial Security initiative, which offers eligible households with income of \$100,000 or less to file their taxes at no charge. With 25 locations throughout the county, families are able to have an IRS-Certified volunteer tax preparer help them file their taxes. Sites open starting the first week in February, and services are offered in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean. To schedule an appointment contact (888) 434-8248 or connect with Jessica González at (714) 619-7008.



## Free Mental Health App for Youth

Research shows a significant rise in mental health issues among our youth due to pressures around academic stress, social media, and tech use. As digital natives, your child and their generation face complex challenges and stressors unlike any before them, and they often struggle in silence. **Soluna** is a completely free, safe, and confidential mental health app for 13-25 year olds in California. The app connects young people with professional coaches, self-guided tools, digital journaling, a peer community, and more—at no cost to youth or their families. To learn more and get started, simply download the Soluna App from the App Store or Google Play!



## Celebrate Lunar New Year

February 10, 2024 | Parade begins 9:30 AM  
Bolsa Ave between Magnolia St. & Bushard St.  
Westminster, CA



## Dia de Los Niños, Dia de Los Libros

April 27, 2024 | 10:30 AM - 2 PM  
Santa Ana Public Library



## SHOP THE CLEMENTINE MOBILE FOOD TROLLEY AT BBBS

Get your fresh fruits and vegetables at Clementine, the mobile food trolley! Set up in the Big Brothers Big Sisters parking lot, free groceries and supplies for eligible OC families\* as available. Advanced sign up is required.

**March 13**

**SIGN UP AT [OCBIGS.ORG/FOOD-TROLLEY](https://ocbigs.org/food-trolley)**

\* Must be a resident of Orange County with school-aged child(ren) in the home



# Big Brothers Big Sisters®

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