



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

PARENT NEWSLETTER

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BBBS TEAM

Whether your child is paired with a high school mentor, a workplace mentor, or a community mentor, their relationship is a cornerstone to their growth. Across all programs, our shared goal is to uplift our youth, helping them build skills, confidence, and connections. Through the ups and downs of the year, the support from their mentor is a steady source of encouragement, helping them feel seen, heard, and valued.

This holiday season, we hope each family can take a moment to celebrate the small wins, reflect on what we've accomplished together, and look forward to what's to come. We're grateful for your trust, partnership, and dedication as we help our children thrive.



Jessica González

Director of Program Support Services

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To stay up on the latest news and updates for parents and guardians, visit ocbigs.org/parent-news

END-OF-YEAR REFLECTIONS

Our kids learn so much just by watching us, especially when it comes to navigating life's ups and downs. The holiday season is a great time for parents to help them pause and think about what they've accomplished—and where they want to go next. Here are a few ways we can all encourage growth and reflection:

- **Reflecting on Growth:** Sometimes, children don't realize just how much they've grown until we talk about it. Share a few of your own proud moments from the year and encourage them to think about their own. Whether they've made a new friend, learned something new, or simply tried their best, reflecting on these moments helps build confidence and appreciation for how far they've come.
- **Setting Goals for the New Year:** Kids thrive with a little structure and purpose, and setting a few simple goals can make a big difference. It could be something related to their mentoring experience, like spending more time together, or something personal, like learning a new hobby. These small goals add excitement and give them something positive to look forward to.
- **Keeping Connections Strong:** While the holidays can uproot routines, you can help your child maintain their bond with their mentor. Simple actions, like making a holiday card or reflecting on what they appreciate about their mentor, can keep the connection alive and remind them that good relationships are worth nurturing, even during busy times.*

**To ensure these connections stay positive and safe, it's important to follow program guidelines. Up ahead, each program will share suggestions for keeping connections strong in ways that work best for everyone.*

UPCOMING BBBS EVENTS



Suicide Prevention Training for Parents

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Saturday, November 23 | 10 AM - 11:30 AM | Big Brothers Big Sisters Office
1801 E Edinger Ave, Santa Ana, CA 92705

Your role as a parent is invaluable in supporting your child's mental health. We invite you to join us for an important Suicide Prevention Training, led by a licensed therapist from the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Health Living, designed to help you recognize warning signs, respond effectively, and leverage support within your family and community.



Annual Holiday Gift Drive

[CLICK HERE TO NOMINATE A CHILD](#)

Nominations are now open for our Holiday Gift Drive! We believe every child deserves to experience the magic of the holidays, and this is our way of making it happen.

Participation is based on a first-come, first-served basis, and families must be present at the event to be eligible. While we can't guarantee every gift request will be fulfilled, our generous community of donors is doing all they can to make as many holiday wishes come true as possible. Once wish lists are completed, you'll receive a confirmation text with more details the week of the event.

We know how valuable these opportunities are for our families during the holiday season. If you're unable to register for the BBBS Holiday Gift Drive, please call or text our Family Resource Specialist, Marissa Gonzalez, at (714) 619-7020 to join a waitlist for similar community events and programs, like Families Together of OC. We'll reach out as soon as we hear of other opportunities, working to help connect your family with holiday experiences whenever possible.



SAVE THE DATE!

Mental Health Summit: Mind and Money Matters

Saturday, February 22, 2025 at Samueli Academy

Bigs, Littles and Parents are invited to join us for an empowering day focused on mental wellness and financial stability. This summit will feature insightful workshops and a resource fair to connect you with mental health and financial planning experts.

FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAM PARENTS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we look back on the year so far, we are proud of all that we have accomplished together. Through various match events and trainings, we've provided meaningful opportunities for Bigs and Littles to connect, grow, and strengthen their relationships. These shared experiences have built a strong foundation for lasting mentorships.

As we head into the holiday season, we know that the busyness of family gatherings, travel, and holiday activities can make it challenging for matches to spend as much time together. Here are some tips to help your child maintain their emotional well-being and stay connected with their Big:

- **Stay Connected with Their Big:** Encourage your child to check in with their Big during this time, whether it's a quick phone call, text, or even a holiday card! Maintaining communication helps keep their bond strong, even when they can't see each other in person.
- **Plan for Post-Holiday Outings:** Help your child schedule their first outing with their Big after the busy holiday season. Having something to look forward to can help them stay positive and excited about reconnecting.
- **Encourage Emotional Expression:** The holiday season can bring up a lot of different emotions. Encourage your child to talk openly about how they feel—whether they're excited, anxious, or even a little sad. Let them know it's okay to experience a mix of emotions.
- **Create Special Family Moments:** While your child may miss their Big, this is also a great time to create special moments at home. Family traditions, no matter how small, can provide comfort and joy during the holiday season.
- **Focus on Gratitude:** Encourage your child to think about the things they are thankful for, including their Big, family, and other positive aspects of their life. Practicing gratitude can improve their mood and help them reflect on the positive relationships they have.
- **Stay Active and Engaged:** Keeping busy with fun holiday activities can help Littles stay engaged and excited. Whether it's a craft project, baking, or going on a family walk, these moments can help manage feelings of loneliness or boredom.

We are grateful for the incredible support you provide at home, and we are here to work hand-in-hand with you to ensure your child continues to thrive. Here's to more growth and connection in the coming year!

Warmly,



Ariana Zavala

Director of Community Based Programs

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FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIGS PARENTS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We know that the holiday season can be a busy and stressful time for families. Please know that our support doesn't end when the session bell rings. At Big Brothers Big Sisters, we believe in supporting the whole child, and that includes connecting them with any additional resources they or their family may need to truly thrive.

I encourage you to take the time to review ALL the information and resources included in this quarterly Parent Newsletter. If you or your family needs assistance—whether it's financial support, food services, mental health resources—please don't hesitate to reach out. You can contact your Program Specialist directly to request a referral to our Family Resource Specialist. We are here to help in any way we can!



Nadia Sanchez

Site-Based Program Manager

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Q&A | PARENT TESTIMONIALS



Q: What positive changes have you noticed in your child since they've been paired with a Big?

A: "Now, he is more sociable, talkative, and he likes to play."

Q: How has the mentoring experience impacted your child's confidence, communication, or school performance?

A: "He's become more open about sharing his thoughts and ideas, both at home and in school. I've noticed he's more willing to ask questions and take on leadership roles in group activities. His school performance has also improved, especially in areas where he used to struggle with focus or participation. Tomorrow he will be receiving the Franklin Falcon Scholar award, which we're so proud of! His Big Brother has been a great role model for him, and their relationship has helped boost his self-esteem. I am very thankful to the Big Brothers Big Sisters program."

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.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIGS PARENTS

WAYS TO STAY ENGAGED DURING WINTER BREAK

Winter break is a great time for relaxation and for families to spend time together. However, the absence of our regular, after-school mentoring sessions can take a toll on students who thrive on the connection they have with their Big. Here are some ways to help your child navigate the changes the holiday season brings:

- **Keep a Routine:** While school may be out, maintaining a daily routine provides stability. Encourage them to keep up with the activities they enjoy doing with their Big during weekly sessions, like reading, drawing, or playing games.
- **Talk About Feelings:** If your child misses their Big, help them express and process their emotions by asking simple questions like, "What do you miss most about seeing your Big?" Let them know it's normal to miss the connection, and reassure them that sessions will start again soon.
- **Get Creative:** Encourage your child to create something special for their Big, like a drawing or a note. Parents are welcome to send these to their Program Specialist via text, who will then forward them to their Bigs. This can help your child feel connected, even during the break!



PERSONAL SAFETY RULES

At BBBS, safety is our number one priority. Over winter break, please be aware that **Bigs and Littles are NOT permitted to have contact or visits.**

For the safety and well-being of all participants, Littles are strictly prohibited from exchanging personal contact information with their Big, such as phone numbers or social media profiles.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

The YODP is a tool we use to set, track, and support progress throughout a match. We focus on five key goals:

1. Increasing confidence
2. Building social skills
3. Learning self-regulation
4. Future planning and exploration
5. Creating stronger relationships

If you have specific goals you'd like your student to focus on, please share them with your Program Specialist.

ACTIVITIES

We have some exciting activities lined up after we return from break:

- **Cards for a Loved One:** To celebrate the meaningful relationships in their lives, students will design cards and bracelets to gift to friends, family, or their Big.
- **Slime:** This interactive activity is a perfect way for matches to laugh, learn, and make a memorable mess together.
- **Flower Power:** We'll paint our own flower pots, plant seeds in them, and learn about responsibility as they grow!

FOR WORKPLACE MENTORING PARENTS



During monthly group sessions facilitated by Big Brothers Big Sisters, **Workplace Mentoring** focuses on fostering college and career readiness and leadership development in high school and college students through mentorship. Our corporate mentors from some of Orange County's top businesses provide students with guidance and support to set them on a path towards success and empowerment.

This past month, we kicked off the new school year for two of our returning Workplace Mentoring Program cohorts, and soon, we will be celebrating the launch of two brand new ones!

PROGRAM REMINDERS



We will be taking a break for the holidays! There will be no scheduled sessions in December.



Match Lunches: Mentors can have lunch with their mentees at school during lunch hour. Program Specialists must be notified at least 5 days in advance, and mentees' Parent/Guardian must sign a waiver before meeting up.



Special Events: Mentors are permitted to attend their mentees' special school events (e.g. sports games, performances, etc.). Program Specialists must be notified at least 5 days in advance, and mentees' Parent/Guardian must sign a waiver before meeting up.



Match Communication: Mentors and mentees are encouraged to communicate outside of scheduled sessions via text, call, and/or Zoom. Matches will decide how they choose to communicate outside of sessions. Mentees will also participate in bi-monthly match support calls with their Program Specialist.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES & EVENTS



Plaza Navideña

Celebrate the start of the holiday season with a festive evening in Downtown Santa Ana! This free community event invites everyone to enjoy a magical tree lighting ceremony, live entertainment, and arts and crafts for all ages. Families can capture memories with Santa in special photo opportunities, making it a perfect way to support local businesses and share in the holiday cheer.

Date & Time: November 23, 5 PM - 8 PM

Location: Plaza Calle Cuatro, 325 E. Fourth Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701

To learn more, visit santa-ana.org/plaza-navidena

Brea Christmas Lights

Brea Eagle Hills neighborhood is known for its enchanting light displays along Primrose Avenue and surrounding streets. This no-cost, community-driven event runs throughout December from dusk to 10 PM each night, transforming the neighborhood into a winter wonderland with dazzling lights, themed decorations, and even occasional holiday treats offered by local residents!

Location: Brea Eagle Hills (2970 Primrose Ave, Brea, CA 92821)



The Nutcracker Ballet

Experience the holiday magic of The Nutcracker Ballet! This classic performance brings the season to life, perfect for a memorable family outing. Thanks to our partnership, tickets are free for BBBS families and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Date & Time: Friday, December 6 | 6:30 PM

Location: Downey Theatre (8435 Firestone Blvd, Downey, CA)

If interested, please reach out to Marissa Gonzalez at (714) 619-7020 by November 15.



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.

November 13

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

Registration form now open

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



Big Brothers Big Sisters®

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