

# A Snapshot of Success

## Adult Little Survey

Conducted by Harris Interactive

**Big Brothers Big Sisters** – the country's oldest, largest, most effective donor and volunteer supported mentoring network – **has positively impacted the lives of vulnerable children for more than 100 years.**



**Big Brothers Big Sisters**

Big Brothers Big Sisters believes that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life.

In communities across the country Big Brothers Big Sisters is there to help children reach their potential and, through them, **transform families, schools and communities.**

**We** know from controlled studies the benefits of Big Brothers Big Sisters programs – improving children’s odds for succeeding

in school, behaving nonviolently, avoiding drugs and alcohol, and getting along better with their family and peers. (To read more about our Community-Based and School-Based Mentoring research, go to [BigBrothersBigSisters.org](http://BigBrothersBigSisters.org).)

To better understand the longer-term value of Big Brothers Big Sisters programs, we commissioned Harris Interactive to contact a group of adults who had been Littles for over a year to ask questions about their experience as Littles and about their well-being as adults. **The new data gives us a glimpse as to what happens when Littles become adults.**

Between March 3 and April 16, 2009, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 200 adults who participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters as Littles for at least one year during their childhood.

There were 109 alumni sampled from Harris Interactive’s panel of double opt-in online respondents, called the Harris Poll Online<sup>SM</sup> panel. In addition, alumni were sampled from lists provided by Big Brothers Big Sisters consisting of names provided by 119 of our agencies across the country, as well as people who self-identified as alumni through our e-newsletter subscriber list or the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America website.

*Note: The positive conditions may have been caused by various influences and we should, therefore, not conclude that Big Brothers Big Sisters’ involvement caused these conditions. Rather, the items give us a snapshot to better know this group of alumni and suggest the need to conduct future studies to determine Big Brothers Big Sisters’ long-term effects.*

## Adult Littles Describe the Benefits

**Transformation** – Adults who participated in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program as children reported genuine positive outcomes including increased self-esteem and strong relationships with their spouse, children and friends.

**Life-success** – Alumni Littles reported achieving key life goals such as obtaining a four-year college degree and being engaged in their communities as adults.

**Enduring** – Relationships between alumni in the study and their Bigs endured the test of time (64% still in touch), paying personal dividends well into the future.

### ■ Adult Littles say having been a Little contributed significantly to the person they are today.

- Almost all alumni surveyed (90%) agreed their Big made them feel better about themselves. Further, 85% said being a Little has influenced them somewhat or a great deal to have confidence in their abilities.
- Large majorities of adult Littles said their Big provided stability when they needed it (90%) and changed their perspective on what they thought possible in life (81%). Three-quarters (77%) said they set higher goals than they would have on their own because of their Big.
- Bigs also were reported to have had a major influence on school life of former Littles. Over three-quarters (77%) reported doing better in school because of their Big, almost two-thirds (65%) agreed that their Big helped them reach a higher level of education than they thought possible and half (52%) agreed that their Big kept them from dropping out of high school.

### ■ Former Littles also report success and achievement as adults, despite challenging circumstances growing up.

- Many alumni reported having achieved higher levels of education than their parents. 42% of adult Littles earned a four-year college degree or more compared to 22% of their fathers and 25% of their mothers.
- 46% of alumni reported having a current household income of \$75,000 or more, even though 51% viewed their financial situation as worse off than the average American household growing up.
- Over six in ten (62%) alumni perceived themselves to have achieved a higher level of success than their peers who weren’t involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters growing up.

# The Future

The children served by Big Brothers Big Sisters are among America's most vulnerable, often living in single parent households, growing up in poverty, or coping with parental incarceration. Independent research has told us for some time that Big Brothers Big Sisters improves the odds that the children we serve will succeed educationally and socially while in our program. This study is our first quantitative examination of the possible long-term value of Big Brothers Big Sisters. This snapshot of former Littles that were in the program for at least one year supports what we know anecdotally – they believe their match had a significant impact on their lives and they consider themselves more successful than their childhood peers.

As shown in previous Big Brothers Big Sisters research, this survey showing positive feelings by alumni who were matched for at least a year gives further indication that longer matches are stronger.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters continues to focus on serving more children who are most in need, while also providing all children in our program with the strongest, longest-lasting relationships possible.**



**Former Littles believe their match had a significant impact on their lives — and they consider themselves more successful than their childhood peers.**



Big Brothers Big Sisters

With programs located in thousands of local communities across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves over a quarter million children annually.

## An Adult Little's Success Story

At 27 years old, Angel, one of the successful Littles who participated in the survey, has an impressive résumé. He has served in the Air Force for six years and visited 12 countries, is about to graduate from college with honors and is finishing his degree in psychology. Angel also runs a group for at-risk youth at a children's home.

Angel has come a long way from the shy, lonely, seven-year-old he was 20 years ago. One of four children raised by his mother and grandmother, Angel liked school but wasn't very popular. **Without his father in his life, he needed a guy to hang out with, someone who would draw him out of his shell and help him become a confident, successful young man.**

Angel's mother called Big Brothers Big Sisters, whose staff interviewed the family and matched Angel with Big Brother Rob, a young dental student at the time.

Now, 20 years later, long since the match officially ended, Angel and Rob are still close friends, still sharing stories, plans and dreams. **Rob says he is proud of who Angel has become: a hard-working, good-natured young man who cares about others and is making a difference in the community.**

The study found that adults who were matched for at least one year as children report that having a Big Brother or Big Sister played an integral role in who they are today by positively influencing their self-confidence, providing stability, changing their perspective on life, and pushing them to set higher goals.

—Study Conducted by Harris Interactive



**Please note** that this survey represents the adult lives of some of our most successful alumni Littles. We know that the longer a child is matched through Big Brothers Big Sisters and the stronger the relationship with the Big, the more positive the outcomes. While survey respondents reported an above average match length, Big Brothers Big Sisters strives to create long-term positive outcomes in the lives of all children we serve. To read the full report, please visit us online at [BigBrothersBigSisters.org](http://BigBrothersBigSisters.org).



[BigBrothersBigSisters.org](http://BigBrothersBigSisters.org)