



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Central California
www.bigs.org



Winter 2011

BIGS BULLETIN



“He saved my life.” DeAndre, a longshoreman on the docks of Oakland, is speaking of his Big Brother John Morris. DeAndre grew up as the middle child in a West Fresno gang-infested neighborhood with a single mother, three brothers, and a sister. His brothers all ended up in prison. “I was the only one that got the opportunity for a Big Brother.”

“He saved my life. He gave me the opportunity to make the choice myself.”

“We started out just doing things together on the weekend or once a week when I was in 8th grade. I was having trouble at school and joining gangs. He gave me a choice – either spend time with him or gangs. His neighborhood was a whole new world to me. I would go over to his house, play basketball, hang out, go roller skating at Roller Town, or do homework where it was quiet. He was the kindest man and a real father figure.” DeAndre and John were matched officially for five years, unofficially for 33.

When DeAndre got kicked out of Edison High for “being bad and running around, John talked with me. He never gave up on me. He gave me the opportunity to choose myself.” He graduated from Washington Union and attended two years at City College. After a brief career in boxing, he got involved with the shipping industry. Through it all, the two remained in touch. Now with two children of his own and happily married, he gets emotional speaking of John. “I will never forget him.”
(See more of DeAndre’s story in an interview on www.bigs.org)

In Memoriam

John Morris, a salesman for 3 M Corporation, was a Big Brother mentoring four different young men in the 1970sand 80s. In 1982 he was National Big Brother of the Year. He served the agency as a board member, recruited 44 different mentors, and was a 30 year fundraiser. He and a few others started the local version of Bowl for Kids Sake that is celebrating 25 years this year. It now raises a net of more than \$70,000 each year, roughly 9% of our budget. Each year he brought in teams and donations, and was a constant in the decades of change throughout the agency’s history. In 2010 he was awarded Volunteer Fundraiser of the Year for the Central Valley through the Association of Fundraising Professionals. John unexpectedly passed away this summer. We miss him.



Enclosed is a gift of \$ _____ payable to **BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CALIFORNIA**

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| Please designate my gift to: | <input type="checkbox"/> WHEREVER NEEDED MOST | <input type="checkbox"/> Fresno County | <input type="checkbox"/> Kings County |
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Please contact me about volunteering.

First Results from Youth Outcome Survey Shows Impact

The first results of comparison baseline and one year follow-up surveys measuring the results of youth involved in the program are now in. Measuring 8 different categories, here are some highlights.

Community-based (meeting about 12-20 hours a month)

- **71%** improved their belief they would **finish high school** for a full **85%** now believing they will graduate
- **70%** improved their feelings of **school competency**
- **67%** improved their feelings of **social acceptance**
- **38%** improved their **grades**



With your help, we are moving forward with positive changes for our youth!

School-based/High School Bigs (meeting about 4 hours a month in Madera and Tulare Counties)

- **67%** improved their feelings of **school competency**
- **59%** improved their **grades**
- **55%** improved their feelings of **social acceptance**
- **46%** improved their belief they would **finish high school** for a full **77%** believing they will graduate

Thank you to everyone donating to the "\$170k for Kids" Campaign which raised \$168,000! We met our goal to retain all matches after the unexpected elimination of the federal Mentoring Children of Prisoners grant.

Bits on Bigs

With Shauna Goodman moving to Philadelphia, our new Fund Development Officer **Nancy Conway** has joined our staff. She founded the successful store Scribbles, has been involved in political fundraising, and most recently worked in the financial investment sector before joining BBBS. Give her a call or stop by to meet her. Also, a new Americorps volunteer, **Chris Toth**, has joined us for a year to help us with volunteer recruitment. Thanks to Hands On Central California for this opportunity. And our new Program Director **Diane Phakonekham** is forming a Parent Council.

We have good news in this ongoing recession. We ended the year in the black by over \$75,000 (about six weeks of expenses), thanks to you and donors like you. In this holiday season, we are grateful on behalf of close to 300 children for your generosity. We need to do it all over again this year, but want to pause and send you our thanks. You make a difference to us all. Happy Holidays!

Thank You!



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