

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest, Inc.
Grant Proposal to Framingham State University Nonprofit Giving Course**

Mission and Organizational History

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest, Inc.'s (BBBS CM/MW) mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

For more than 50 years, BBBS CM/MW has helped transform the lives of more than 30,000 children facing adversity. Founded in the fall of 1963 as an adult-child mentoring organization named Big Brothers of Worcester County, over time we have expanded to include girls and increased our service area. In 2015, we served 954 volunteer mentors and 954 at-risk children in 40 communities throughout Central Massachusetts and Metrowest Boston.

BBBS CM/MW supports at-risk children and youth (ages 6-18) through individualized mentoring programs that are professionally developed and supported. We reach the children who need us most through numerous strategic partnerships with local schools and youth development programs, and volunteers, many coming from local colleges and corporations.

BBBS CM/MW has two types of mentoring programs

In our community-based program, children are referred to us by a parent or guardian and meet with adult mentors at least one hour per week outside of a school or a club environment. Activities and schedules can be varied in this situation and the pair may go to a movie, sporting event, or take a walk in a park.

School/site-based programs result in a mentor and child meeting during or after the school day at a school or youth center. The children are referred to us by professionals active in a child's life such as teachers or guidance counselors. Activities include playing a game, working on the child's homework, or reading together.

In both programs, the essential activity is quality, uninterrupted time between a reliable, caring adult mentor and a child in need of one-to-one support. When individualized activities and interpersonal interactions occur with predictability, children experience improvements in academic performance, social skills, getting along with their families, and decreased risk attitudes.

Target Population

In 2015, we served 954 children in 40 communities in Central Massachusetts and Metrowest Boston. Their demographics are:

Gender: 53% female; 47% male

Ethnicity: 44% Hispanic; 25% Caucasian; 13% African-American; 10% Multi-race

Living situation: 50% one parent-female; 36% two parent; 7% one parent-male; 2% grandparents

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 82%

A significant adult in their lives is incarcerated: 17%

Unique aspects of BBBS CM/MW are:

- We must raise 100% of our operating budget every year. We do not charge our mentors or mentees for our services.

- Though we are an affiliate of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, we do not receive any funds from the organization. We pay Big Brothers Big Sisters of America approximately \$15,000 per year for the Agency Information Database we are required to use, access to our national network’s training and marketing platforms, and program best practices.
- With an annual budget of \$1 million, we are a small nonprofit organization.
- We have a large geographic service area of 40 communities in Central Massachusetts and Metrowest making it challenging to have a presence in every city and town.
- 150,000 children live in our service area, but due to budgetary restraints, we can only serve approximately 1,000.
- 94 of the 954 children served in 2015 live in Framingham, a city with a diverse, high need population.
- We collaborate with colleges, corporations, public schools and youth centers. Due to our relationships with these organizations, we have ready sources of mentors and mentees. However, we need financial resources to administer the programs effectively and within best practices.
- Unlike some mentoring programs, we train our Interview/Match Support Specialists to provide comprehensive, continuous individual support to our mentors, mentees, and families.
- In 2015, children and mentors in our site-based programs were matched with consistent, caring adult volunteers on average for 24.8 months compared to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America national average of 16.3 months.
- Our greatest strength is our passionate program staff. The thoughtfulness, care, and interest in every match is evident in their words and actions. Our agency routinely endeavors to provide basic life necessities such as coats, holiday meals, and access to other social services to needy families we serve through our mentoring programs. A program staff commented, “I knew they wouldn’t have socks to keep their feet warm so I brought some.” Program staff understand the challenges the children face and nurture their ability to overcome them.

Organizational Goals

In the next few years, BBBS CM/MW has a goal of doubling its operating budget from \$1 million to \$2 million. It costs approximately \$1,000 per mentoring match per year and with more funding we will be able to serve more children. We are preparing for this advancement to the next level by establishing a strong development team, recruiting board members with substantial financial connections, and preparing our internal systems, such as our donor database, to manage a larger organization successfully.

Funding Sources

BBBS CM/MW seeks funding from corporations, the United Way, foundations, individuals, and by hosting special events. The list below identifies our 2015 revenue sources:

- 61% Individual donors*
- 16% Foundation and Corporate grants and contributions
- 13% Special events
- 5% United Way of Central Massachusetts
- 3% Donated materials/gifts-in-kind
- 2% Government

*In 2015, we received a one-time bequest of over \$600,000.

For the years 2013-2015, individual donations averaged 56% of our total revenue.

On May 13, 2015, we are holding a special event called the BIG Celebration, Viva Las Vegas, at the restaurant, Skybokx 109, in Natick. Every year we participate in the Rodman Ride for Kids, one of the largest fundraisers for children in the nation.

Staffing

BBBS CM/MW operates with 18 staff members, many full-time and a few part-time. All staff have completed a bachelor's degree and several a master's degree. Staff members previously have worked for the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club and as a middle school teacher, Spanish teacher, special education teacher, after-school program director and research scientist.

Our staff is diverse with members who speak Spanish, Creole, French, Tagalong, Portuguese, and Cantonese. This allows us to work with a diverse population and speak to them in the language that is comfortable for them. It is the goal of the agency to continue to increase our diversity so that our staff and board better represent the populations we serve.

We also have several interns, many from foreign countries who have come to the United States for education, from Clark University, College of the Holy Cross, and Framingham State University. Presently, we have an intern from China who is pursuing her Master's in Public Administration at Clark University. We appreciate the insight these interns bring to our organization and aspire to provide an excellent training experience that helps them to achieve their goal of working in the nonprofit field.

Framingham Programs

BBBS CM/MW is seeking support for its Framingham programs. From March 2015 through February 2016, we matched 14 mentor/mentee pairs who participate in a site-based program at Fuller Middle School. All of the mentors are students from Framingham State University (FSU) or Mass Bay Community College (MBCC). Since the program is new and just began recruiting mentors last fall, the average match length is only a few months. As with many of our college students in Worcester who serve as mentors, we hope that the Fuller Middle School mentors will stay with their mentees throughout their college years.

- The children range in age from 11-14 years
- Eleven are female and 3 are male
- Twelve of the fourteen mentees are Hispanic, one is multi-race, and one is Caucasian
- Nine live with both parents and 5 live with a single mother
- Ten qualify for free/reduced lunch
- Four of the children have a significant adult in their lives incarcerated

The goal of the Fuller Middle School program is to introduce the children to the world of college. The staff is developing curriculum; the children, with the help of their mentors, have created Life Maps, Future Maps, and have interviewed one another about school and career plans. Marlborough Savings Bank will be presenting a Financial Literacy course where mentors and mentees will learn about living expenses and budgeting. The discussions include topics such as college visits and life after Fuller.

Many of the children in the program do not have role models for higher education or professional careers. We want the children to know that they can go to college and graduate. Mentors talking about college life with their mentees may inspire the mentees to consider opportunities and futures unavailable to their parents.

The greatest challenge we have with this program is transporting the students from FSU to Fuller Middle School. Currently, a taxi service, paid for by Metrowest College Planning, is transporting the FSU students. Fortunately, the Mass Bay Community College students are within walking distance.

BBBS CM/MW also has a site-based program at the Framingham Boys & Girls Club (BGC). Twenty-seven mentor/mentee matches meet there weekly during the school year. The average length of matches at this site is 10.6 months with a range of 4.1 to 24.8 months.

- The children range in age from 7-12 years
- Nine are male and 18 are female
- Thirteen are Hispanic, 5 are Caucasian, and 2 are African-American
- Seventeen live with both parents, 8 live with a single mother, and 2 with a single father
- Twenty-two qualify for free/reduced lunch
- One has a significant adult in her life incarcerated

At the BGC, the students are matched with Framingham High School students. In the future, we hope to increase the involvement of FSU students and match them with the children at the BGC. On March 8, Sarah Cowdell and Cliff Brown were able to recruit 30 FSU students as potential mentors. Sarah is planning two more recruiting events followed by an information session on March 28. As with the Fuller Middle School program, transportation to the BGC will be a challenge; the FSU parking lot shuttle bus travels by the BGC so we are working to get the shuttle to stop there as well.

According to the U.S. Census, 27% of Framingham residents are foreign born and 35.5% speak a language other than English at home. The percentage living in poverty is 11.3. The MA Department of Education reports that in October 2014, 39.7% of students were classified as low income, 23.6% have disabilities, and 15.8% are English Language Learners. Given these statistics, it is highly likely that there are many children in Framingham who would benefit from a one-to-one mentoring relationship with a caring, consistent adult. A \$10,000 grant award from the FSU Nonprofit Giving Course students will make it possible for us to serve 10 more mentor/mentee matches.

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Evaluation

To evaluate the success of our programs, BBBS CM/MW uses tools developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

The Youth Outcomes Survey (YOS) is a questionnaire that asks children to rate their academic performance, ability to get along with others, feelings of confidence, sense of the future, and risk attitudes. It also includes an assessment by the child's teacher. The survey is given at the beginning of a match and on each match anniversary. Part of this measurement is a collection of school records.

Our 2015 YOS results are:

76% improved in confidence, including a sense of the future

74% improved in academic grades

67% improved in social acceptance

42% are less likely to engage in risky behavior

The Strength of Relationship Survey (SOR) considers the meaningfulness of the relationship between the mentor and mentee and is given once a year. The process is based on the use of 2 distinct surveys, one for mentors and one for mentees, and it has been tested for reliability and validity. Each question is designed to capture information on relationship qualities that have been found to lead to the development of a match (or lack thereof). Results of the SOR may be used to indicate the need for more time spent on match support or training for staff in relationship building skills. Research has shown that longer, stronger matches result in more positive outcomes for the mentee.

Average Match Length (AML) in months is also indicative of the strength of the mentor/mentee relationship. In 2015, children and mentors in our site-based programs were matched with consistent, caring adult volunteers on average for 24.8 months compared to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America national average of 16.3 months. Our community-based matches averaged 27.1 months in 2015. Many of our college student mentors are matched with the same child throughout their four years at school.

Motivating Participants and a New Initiative

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we often have tickets to give to mentors and mentees to attend professional baseball, basketball, and football games. People also donate tickets for matches to attend theatre performances, concerts, and movies.

Once a month, through our new initiative, MySTEM, Mentoring Youth in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, we schedule opportunities for matches to go to places like Funutation Tekademy in Westborough to participate in a Lego robot day. Regularly, our MySTEM Director travels to schools and youth centers where site-based programs meet to lead a special STEM activity. The children especially like making slime out of borax and glue. We invite educators from the Discovery Museums in Acton to present science workshops at program locations. Last year, several matches learned about sound as vibration.

Children on our waiting list to be matched with a mentor have opportunities as well. Last August, we took several to the Children's Museum in Boston. They explored the exhibits and built structures out of simple materials like paper clips and pipe cleaners which were then tested for stability on a simulated earthquake machine. Every December, we hold a holiday party with pizza, Santa Claus, and thanks to employees at Federal Express, we give away bicycles through a raffle.