

Celebrating

50
YEARS

1975 - 2025



Big Brothers
Big Sisters.

IMPACT REPORT 2025



Big Brothers Big Sisters®

OF CEDAR RAPIDS & EAST CENTRAL IOWA

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with both pride and gratitude—for the young people we serve, the mentors who show up consistently, and the community that continues to believe in the power of mentorship.

In 2025, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa served **399 youth**, each with their own story, challenges, and incredible potential. Because of the commitment of our Bigs and the strength of our program, that potential is turning into measurable impact. This year, **87% of youth demonstrated educational success, 94% reduced risky behaviors, and 75% improved their social-emotional competency**. Perhaps just as meaningful, **95% of our matches reported a positive experience**—a reminder that relationships truly are at the heart of everything we do.



These outcomes don't happen by chance. They happen because of consistency. Because a mentor shows up. Because a child feels seen, heard, and valued. And because a community like ours continues to invest in something bigger than today.

This year also marked a significant milestone—**50 years of Big Brothers Big Sisters in our community**. For five decades, we have stood alongside young people, helping them realize their potential and build brighter futures. That legacy is something we honor deeply.

But anniversaries are not just about looking back—they are about looking forward.

As we celebrate 50 years of impact, we are equally focused on ensuring we are here for the next 50. The needs of our youth are evolving, and the demand for mentors continues to grow—with more than 100 youth currently waiting for a Big. Our responsibility is clear: to expand our reach, strengthen our programs, and build a sustainable future that ensures every young person who needs a mentor has access to one.

Through our **Empowering Potential Campaign**, investments in our programs, and a continued focus on innovation and growth, we are laying the foundation for that future—one where mentorship is not the exception, but the expectation.

We are also proud to share that the strength of our mission is reflected not only in outcomes—but in our culture. In the most recent Coolest Place to Work survey across the Corridor, Big Brothers Big Sisters earned an average score of **5.68 out of 6**. That is a powerful testament to the dedicated, passionate team your support helps sustain—and a reminder that when our team feels supported and inspired, they show up in meaningful ways for the youth and families we serve every day.

To our Bigs, donors, partners, board members, and staff—thank you. Your belief in this mission is what makes all of this possible. Because of you, we are not only changing lives today—we are shaping the future of our community for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Stephanie Hartson

President & CEO

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa



50 YEARS OF IMPACT



1975-2025

1975

The Big Brothers Program began in Linn County in 1975, when a group of citizens became concerned about the large number of boys from single-parent families entering the court system. As a means of prevention, the Big Brothers Program was established. The Linn County Board of Supervisors designated \$30,000 of federal revenue money as start-up funds for Big Brothers, which was administered through the YMCA.



1982

In 1982, two milestones for the organization took place. First, Big Brothers Big Sisters broke away from the YMCA to become a separate United Way agency. Second, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Linn County became affiliated with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America at the Agency-In-Formation level. There are currently 485 affiliated agencies throughout the nation.



1980

In 1980, the need for Big Sisters became evident. With the financial backing from the Hall Foundation, Inc. and the Junior League, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Linn County became an entity.



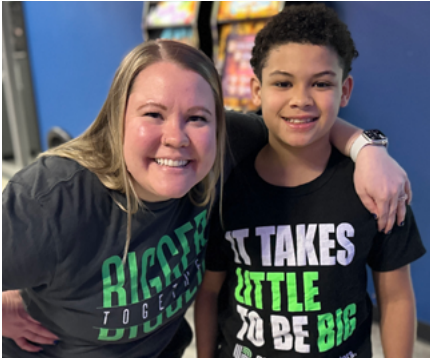
Today

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids and East Central Iowa is one of eight Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies in Iowa.





Community-Based



Community-Based Mentorship is at the heart of our mission, creating meaningful, one-to-one relationships between youth and caring adult mentors. These matches spend time together out in the community—sharing everyday experiences like grabbing a meal, exploring a park, or trying something new—while building trust, confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Through consistent connection and support, Bigs help Littles navigate challenges, celebrate successes, and see new possibilities for their future. These relationships are not only impactful in the moment, but often create lasting change that extends well into adulthood.

Becoming a Big doesn't require a significant time commitment—just one hour a month can make a meaningful difference in a child's life. It's a simple way to show up, but the impact is anything but small. With each new match, we move closer to ensuring every young person who needs a mentor has one.

Lunch Buddies



Lunch Buddies, our school-based mentoring program, creates consistent, supportive connections between youth and adult mentors right in the school setting. Bigs meet with their Littles during the school day over lunch and recess, providing a reliable presence and positive role model in a space where youth already feel comfortable.

These regular, in-school visits help build confidence, strengthen social skills, and give Littles something to look forward to each week. For many youth, having a trusted adult show up consistently can make a meaningful difference in their school experience and overall well-being.

With a structured schedule and a school-based setting, Lunch Buddies is also a great option for volunteers with busy lives. It's a simple, accessible way to make an impact—proving that even small moments of connection can lead to lasting change.

Big Futures



Big Futures is designed to support Littles as they take the next steps toward adulthood, helping them explore their goals and build a plan for the future. Through continued guidance from their Big and access to additional resources, youth are empowered to navigate important milestones like graduating high school, pursuing higher education or career opportunities, and developing life skills.

This program extends the impact of mentorship by focusing on long-term success—ensuring Littles feel prepared, confident, and supported as they transition into independence. From college and career exploration to goal setting and decision-making, Big Futures helps open doors and expand what's possible.

By investing in Big Futures, we are not only supporting youth in the present—we are helping shape strong, capable leaders for tomorrow.



The Cedar Rapids & Eastern Iowa Chapter has been recognized with the Impact Award for 2025.

Our Values

Integrity First
Comprehensive Safety
Positive Impact
Access, Belonging & Opportunity



COMMUNITY DATA



87%

Demonstrate educational success



94%

Report reduced engagement in risky behaviors



74%

Show improved socio-emotional competency



82%

2025 senior class graduated



LOCAL IMPACT - JARED HILLS



Do you remember the year 1975? The VCR was created, disco filled the airwaves, and shows like Happy Days painted a picture of strong family life. But beyond the television screen, many children in our community were facing very real challenges. That same year marked the beginning of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa—a mission rooted in showing up for youth who needed it most.

1975 was also the era of the Magic 8 Ball. Kids would ask a question, give it a shake, and wait for answers to appear. Eight-year-old Ward Fuller might have asked if he'd get a new bike for Christmas. His nine-year-old brother, Mark, may have wondered if he'd always share a bedroom with his five siblings. Their mother, Annette, likely had bigger questions: Will my boys grow up safely? Who will help guide them into becoming responsible men? With their father absent, she turned to Big Brothers Big Sisters for support.

At the time, the agency was just getting started. While waiting to be matched, children were invited to group activities. To build awareness, staff reached out to local service clubs for volunteers willing to spend a day with these kids. One of the first to step forward was Jared Hills. Jared met Mark and Ward at a picnic outing at Ellis Park, where they spent the day paddle boating on Robin's Lake. Out on the water, with no easy escape, Ward looked at Jared and asked, "Do you have a Little Brother?" When Jared said no, Ward followed up with, "Would you be ours?" And just like that, a life-changing relationship began.

Over the years, Jared became a steady and meaningful presence in their lives. He took them to band concerts in the park, taught them how to water ski, and spent long hours with them cutting firewood. He taught



them how to drive—each brother remembers it a little differently, one behind the wheel of a white truck, the other in a Lincoln. They attended church together, joined youth group, and went Christmas caroling with Jared and his wife, Carol. After high school, Mark even worked at Jared's company, gaining hands-on experience and learning valuable skills.

What began as a single day of volunteering turned into decades of connection, mentorship, and friendship. Jared was someone they could count on—not just as kids, but well into adulthood. As Mark once shared, "It's nice to know I can call Jared and he'll be there."

Because of Jared, Annette never needed a Magic 8 Ball to know how her sons would turn out. With his guidance and care, Mark and Ward grew into thoughtful, responsible men—carrying forward the lessons and values he helped instill.

Jared continued his commitment to mentorship for many years, including an eight-year match with his Little Brother, Tyler. His impact spanned generations, shaping lives in ways that can never be fully measured. Jared passed away on July 10,

2023, leaving behind a legacy of compassion, generosity, and unwavering commitment to youth in our community. In a powerful tribute to his life and the values he lived by, his wife made a \$500,000 gift in Jared's memory to support our Recreation Station—ensuring that future generations of Bigs and Littles will have a place to connect, grow, and build relationships just as meaningful as the ones Jared fostered.

Today, we remember Jared not only as one of our very first Big Brothers, but as someone who embodied the heart of this mission. His kindness, consistency, and belief in the potential of young people created a legacy that will live on through every life he touched.

Though Jared is no longer with us, his impact endures—in the lives of Mark, Ward, Tyler, and so many others.

Whether matched for one year or forty, mentors like Jared remind us what is possible when someone simply shows up and cares.

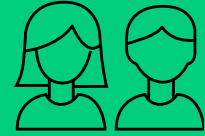
Thank you, Jared, for changing lives for the better—forever.





Our Mission

At Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa, our mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.



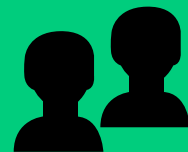
399
youth served in 2025



100
new matches made



79.33%
live in single-parent or
non-traditional households



54%
identify as
children of color



83.42%
receive free or
reduced lunch



BBBS Littles are:
**20% more likely
to attend college**

→ Fueling a skilled workforce.

BBBS Littles:
**EARN 15% more
OVER THEIR LIFETIMES**

→ Strengthening financial independence
and consumer spending.



Being a BBBS Little:
**CLOSES 2/3 OF THE
ECONOMIC GAP**

→ Enhancing economic mobility.



CELEBRATING LONGSTANDING MATCHES



10+ Years

Little	Big(s)
Logan	Alicia & Tyler Tjelmeland
Ethan	Elizabeth Stewart
Alyssa	Katherine Manders
Jose	Eli Cochrane
Josh	Sandy Krumm
Dillon	Erin Lowe
Fiona	Brandy Ostwinkle
Callie	Katie Ramey

5+ Years

Little	Big(s)	Little	Big(s)
Johnathan	Tracy & Jason Kamphaugh	William	Blake Brandt
Airiana	Sharon Wendel	Gabriel	Tanner Retzlaff
Paris	Sue Christensen	Nehemiah	Brad Hart
Amaya	Ruthie Dunn	Uriah	Lonnie Curry
Cayla	Maurisa Clark	Janiyah	Erica Steapp
AJ	Doug Wick	Jaliyah	Bethany Creed
John	Shane Baker	DaRiyah	Daisy Clymer
Joshua	Dick Lorenz	Dylan	Beth Otting
Daemirra	Polly Mattison	Jayce	Steve Myers
Kwindale	Kent Landhuis	Ava	Susan Johnson
La'Marious	Matt Welsh	Libbe	Tricia Raper
Gabrielle	Marisa Castorena	Samira	Caitlyn Flanagan
Dereon	Jennifer Dobel	Trae	Tedde & Hunter Orton
Haley	Tammy Ohrnstein	Aniela	Sammy Petersen
Akira	Myranda Hadley	Gracyn	Lauren Crippes
Makya	Rachelle Haker	Adyn	Alex Stewart
Drake	Justin Wasson	Colton	Jackson Barrigar
Kloe	Nancy Hill-Davis	Alex	Joe Sample
Kizara	Jennifer Lucas	Bradlee	Heath Allen
Eimyah	Salena Watkins	Preston	Nick Garland
Emma	Whitney Schreder	Sully	Jade Ducharme
Darios	Joe McElwee & Carmen Pickering	Mallory	Lauren Baskerville
Yazmine	Madison Ebel	Karma	Nancy Roth
Levi	Matthew Lehman	Izzy	Karon Schladetzky
Lyla	Dianna Richardson	Chris	Alex Carlson
Corbin	Colby & Morgan Nielsen	Jonathan	Annie & Ben Bulter
Ethan	Eyasu Russell	Brittney	Shelly Nunemaker
		Daegon	Derek & Cindy Brown



LOCAL IMPACT - TRINITY YOUNG



Big Brothers Big Sisters did not just give me a mentor — it gave me stability in seasons where stability did not exist. From a very young age, my life was marked by transition, hardship, and uncertainty. What remained consistent was the presence of my Big, Laurel, and the support of this program. That consistency changed the trajectory of my life.

Through car jam sessions, advice, laughter, and honest conversations about life, Laurel gave me something I had never truly experienced before: belief in myself. She showed me that trying new things could be exciting rather than frightening, that growth happens outside of comfort zones, and that my past did not define my future.

When I faced bullying, homelessness, loss, and moments of self-doubt, Big Brothers Big Sisters did not disappear. They met me exactly where I was.

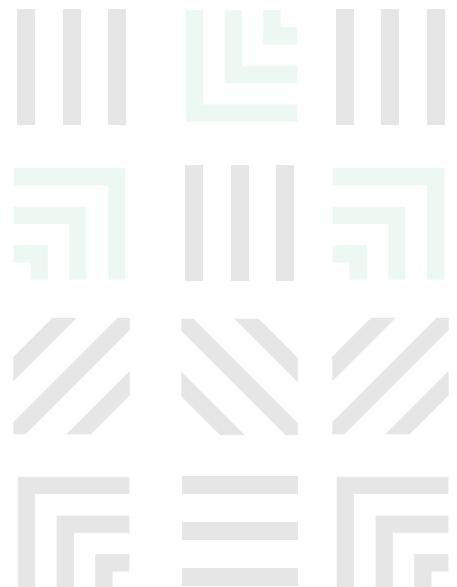
Because someone chose to walk beside me instead of walking away, I learned what real leadership looks like. Leadership is not about authority — it is about presence. It is about being steady when others feel uncertain. It is about advocating for those who feel unseen and reminding people of their worth when they struggle to see it themselves.

The leader I am today is directly shaped by the example set before me. I strive to lead with empathy, resilience, and accountability. I believe one consistent relationship can transform a life because I have lived that truth.

My vision moving forward is to carry that same steadiness into every space I enter — to be someone others can rely on, just as I once relied on someone who chose to believe in me.

Big Brothers Big Sisters became the addition to my life that I did not expect to change me, but one that I will forever be grateful for.

Always choose kindness,
Trinity Young



BIG MAGIC BREAKFAST



Big Magic Breakfast brings community members together for an inspiring morning focused on the life-changing impact of mentorship. Through powerful stories from Bigs, Littles, and families, attendees gain a deeper understanding of our mission and the critical need for caring adult mentors in our community.

This event not only raises awareness but creates a meaningful opportunity for individuals and businesses to get involved—whether by volunteering, investing in our programs, or becoming advocates for youth.

In 2025, Big Magic Breakfast resulted in the recruitment of 16 new Bigs, helping us move closer to ensuring every child who needs a mentor has one.



300
Attendees



16
New Bigs



\$44,614
Raised



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

PLATINUM



**CEDAR
RAPIDS
BANK &
TRUST**

BRONZE



BOWL FOR KIDS' SAKE



Bowl for Kids' Sake is Big Brothers Big Sisters' signature fundraising event, bringing our community together for a fun and meaningful way to support local youth. Teams raise funds and celebrate their impact with a day of bowling, connection, and purpose.

In 2025, thanks to the incredible generosity of our participants and sponsors, we raised \$252,748 to help create and sustain life-changing mentoring relationships.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE



\$252,748
Raised



\$50,500
in Sponsorships



1,517
Bowlers Hosted



FINANCIALS



Revenue

General Contributions - Individual Donors	\$533,960
General Contributions - Corporate Donors	\$79,215
Grant Revenue	\$211,988
Bowl for Kids' Sake Event Revenue	\$268,307
United Way of East Central Iowa	\$73,520
Endowment Disbursements	\$47,888
Other	\$114,106
Total	\$1,328,984

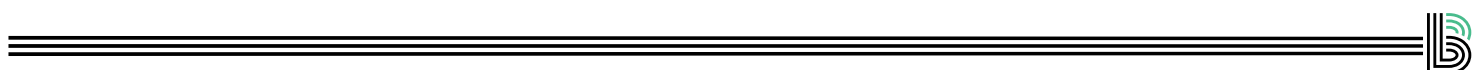


Expenses

Salaries & Benefits	\$673,260
Auditing & Professional Services - Accounting	\$58,033
Background Checks & Safety Procedures	\$2,631
Office Supplies & Printing	\$6,878
Match Enrichment & Program Activities	\$32,333
Telephone & Internet	\$6,379
Postage & Shipping	\$2,499
Rent & Utilities	\$46,389
Professional Development - Training, Meals & Travel	\$23,075
Recruitment, Marketing & Program Appreciation	\$8,850
Fundraising & Event Related Expenses	\$32,253
Insurance	\$22,284
Technology, Equipment & IT	\$30,944
National Dues Paid to BBBS of America	\$19,196
Other: Depreciation, Legal Fees, etc.	\$26,926
Total	\$991,930



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa is actively working to increase its savings account to meet the new standard of maintaining six months of operation expenses. As 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, all net income shall be deposited into the organization's savings account to ensure compliance with this financial objective.



CAMPAIGN DONORS



\$100,000+

The Jared & Carol Hills Foundation

\$50,000-\$99,000

Chris Kalkman^

Lindsay & Mitch Leahy^

\$25,000-\$49,999

Anonymous

Loren & Patti Coppock

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Cedar Rapids Inside LLMC

IBEW 405/ NECA

Schimberg Company

\$10,000-\$24,999

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Foundation- Linn County Fund

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Kent & Julie Statler

Duane & Anne Jasper

Kent & Polly Mattison^

Phil & Christy Rezin

Crescent-Janko Masonic Foundation

Robert Becker & Diane Handler

Derek & Cindy Brown

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Annie Feldstein[^]
Match Support Specialist



[^] Big



We Can't Do It Without You!

At Big Brothers Big Sisters, our mission is fueled by the incredible support of donors and mentors like you. Your dedication and generosity are the cornerstone of our organization, empowering us to make a profound difference in the lives of children. Whether you're providing financial support, offering your time and guidance as a mentor or considering joining our community, know that your involvement is the catalyst for positive change.

Give

- Become a monthly or sustaining donor
- Provide a one-time annual gift
- Join as a Big Magic Society Member
- Become a sustaining donor with a planned gift intention

[Donate Today!](#)

Volunteer

- Become a Big and make an impact on the life of a kid in our community today
- Provide your time and talents to support our programming

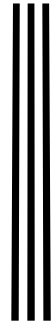


Connect

- Recruit Bigs within your network or company
- Share information about the work we do to empower youth to reach their full potential.



Together, we are transforming futures, one relationship at a time.



Big Brothers Big Sisters®
OF CEDAR RAPIDS & EAST CENTRAL IOWA

**STAY
CONNECTED**

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Agency@BigCR.org

Website

www.BigCR.org

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