Big Brothers Big Sisters
OF CEDAR RAPIDS & EAST CENTRAL IOWA

BIG NEWS: SUPPORTER EDITION

JULY 2026

Letter from our President & CEO

Dear Supporters,

This spring, we celebrated one of our most successful events to date with our Big Magic Breakfast. Four hundred community members joined us—a growth of more than 100 attendees from the previous year—to hear firsthand about the impact mentoring is having across our community. It was a fun, meaningful, and inspiring morning filled with powerful stories, community connection, and a shared commitment to investing in the young people we serve.

During the event, I shared that we were on track to exceed our previous youth-serving numbers. I am proud to report that in Fiscal Year 2026, Big Brothers Big Sisters served 415 youth, an increase of 24 more young people than the previous fiscal year. Every one of those numbers represents a child who has benefited from the guidance, encouragement, and support of a caring mentor.

Our growth continues to build. In calendar year 2025, we served 399 youth, and we are currently on pace to serve more than 425 youth in calendar year 2026. This progress reflects the commitment of our volunteers, staff, board members, partners, and supporters who believe in the power of mentoring to change lives.

We are also excited to share that we have entered Year 2 of our Empowering Potential Campaign. This campaign is helping strengthen the long-term sustainability of our organization, ensuring that future generations of young people will continue to have access to the life-changing opportunities that mentoring provides.

As part of this effort, we are pleased to announce a new Endowment Matching Grant. This exciting opportunity allows donors to maximize their impact by having their endowment investment matched, helping to build a stronger financial foundation for Big Brothers Big Sisters and creating lasting support for our mission.

If you would like to learn more about the Empowering Potential Campaign or the Endowment Matching Grant, I would welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

Thank you for your continued belief in our mission and the young people we serve. Together, we are creating life-changing relationships and empowering young people to achieve their full potential.

With gratitude,
Stephanie Hartson
President & CEO
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cedar Rapids & East Central Iowa

BBBS

MISSION MOMENT

A Decade of Possibility

When Gabby first met her Big, Marisa, she never imagined where the next ten years would lead. As a child, Gabby preferred staying indoors and rarely stepped outside her comfort zone. Over the years, Marisa introduced her to canoeing, hiking, volunteering, and countless new experiences that soon became some of Gabby's favorite memories. More importantly, she became a trusted mentor—someone Gabby could turn to through life's challenges with confidence that she would always be supported.

Gabby's mom, Cassie, watched that transformation unfold firsthand. She shared that Marisa helped bring Gabby out of her shell, encouraged her to try new experiences, and introduced her to community service opportunities that broadened her perspective. One volunteer experience serving meals to those experiencing homelessness left a lasting impression, helping Gabby better understand the needs of others and inspiring a deeper sense of compassion.

As Gabby prepares to begin college and pursue a nursing degree, she credits much of her confidence, resilience, and self-belief to the encouragement Marisa provided over the past decade.

Although their official Big Brothers Big Sisters match has come to a close after ten incredible years, their story isn't over. Gabby and Marisa plan to continue spending time together for years to come—a reminder that the strongest mentoring relationships don't end when a match closes. They become lifelong friendships.

Because of supporters like you, young people gain more than new experiences—they gain someone who believes in them, challenges them to grow, and helps them discover what's possible.

SCOOP UP A LITTLE!

CHANGE A LOT

Here's what we're scooping up this summer:

- Ice cream socials at local shops
- Free ice cream coupons and treats
- Meet current BBBS Staff and learn about mentoring

60 NEW BIGS NEEDED!

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK TO GET THE SCOOP!

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

QUARTERLY IMPACT

Stats and Successes:

- As of the end of June, we've already made **63 new matches!**
- **415 youth served** last fiscal year!
- Our momentum continues, with **new matches still exceeding closures** despite the annual wave of graduations and school transitions.

CURRENT BBBS NEEDS

Youth Are Waiting for a Mentor

- Check out our Amazon Wishlist
- **100+ youth** across Benton, Linn, and Jones Counties are **waiting for a Community-Based Big**
  - 👉 Get started at: www.BigCR.org
- **Financial Support**
  - Your financial support helps us **match youth with a caring adult** and ensure **every match is supported.**
  - **Give today** by scanning the QR code.

SCAN ME

UPCOMING BBBS EVENTS

Annual Party

- September 13th
- Rain Date: September 20th
- Dinner will be provided: Sloppy Joes, Fruit, Chips, Beverage
  - Meal subject to change. Concessions will be open.
- FREE to attend!
- RSVP

Big of the Year Celebration

- October 17

SAVE

BIG MAGIC BREAKFAST

MAY 6 2027

THE

DATE

DOUBLETREE
Downtown Cedar Rapids

SAVE the DATE

BOWL FOR KIDS' SAKE

MATCH BOWLING

SATURDAY, FEB 13 @ 12:30

SUNDAY, FEB 21 @ 3:00

CEDAR RAPIDS BOWLING CENTER