

BIG NEWS: SUPPORTER EDITION

OCTOBER 2026

Letter from our President & CEO

Dear Supporters,

As we enter the final months of the year, I find myself reflecting on all that we have accomplished together. Thanks to your generosity, volunteerism, and belief in our mission, more young people are experiencing the life-changing power of mentorship through Big Brothers Big Sisters.

This year has been one of **growth, innovation, and impact**. Together, we celebrated another successful Big Magic Breakfast, continued to expand our mentoring programs, and **served 415 youth** in Fiscal Year 2026, one of the **strongest years of growth our agency has experienced in recent history**. Because of supporters like you, hundreds of young people in our community have had the opportunity to build confidence, strengthen relationships, and discover their potential.

As we look toward the future, I am especially excited to share the **launch of Big Circles, our new group mentoring pilot program in partnership with the YMCA**. This innovative program will provide youth with additional opportunities to **connect with caring adult mentors while building relationships with their peers**.

Launching this fall, Big Circles will bring together **small groups of youth and qualified mentors in a supportive environment** focused on **learning, personal growth, leadership development, and community connection**. Through **engaging activities and meaningful conversations**, participants will develop **important life skills, strengthen their confidence, and build positive relationships** that help them succeed both now and in the future.

Big Circles represents an exciting new way for us to extend our impact and reach more young people in our community. While our one-to-one mentoring relationships remain at the heart of our mission, this program allows us to **create additional pathways for youth to benefit from the guidance, encouragement, and support of trusted adult mentors**.

We are also excited to continue building momentum in Year 2 of our **Empowering Potential Campaign**. This important initiative is helping strengthen the long-term sustainability of Big Brothers Big Sisters so that **future generations of young people can experience the power of mentorship**. Through our Endowment Matching Grant, **donors have a unique opportunity to maximize their impact by having their endowment investment matched, helping to secure the future of our mission for years to come**.

On behalf of our staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and the youth we serve, **thank you for being part of our Big Brothers Big Sisters family**. We wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year. We look forward to continuing this important work together in the year ahead.

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

MISSION MOMENT



A Friendship That Lasts a Lifetime

When Brittley Dixon was just seven years old, she was matched with her Big Sister, Lois Ralston. What began as school lunches, reading, games, and spelling practice grew into a friendship that would span more than two decades.

Lois was there for Brittley through every stage of her life. She encouraged her in school, celebrated her accomplishments, supported her through the loss of her mother, and became more than a mentor — she became family.

At a Big Magic Breakfast several years ago, Brittley shared the profound impact Lois had on her life:

“Lois is my best friend for life. She grew with me and has been there through every stage of my life... she is one of the best things to ever happen to me. and 90% of the reason I’ve been successful.”

In honor of Lois’s life and the lasting relationship she built with Brittley, Lois’s family recently made a generous gift to Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Their gift is a meaningful way to celebrate Lois and the connection they shared — a reminder that mentoring can grow into something that lasts far beyond the years of a formal match. Sometimes, a Big becomes a lifelong friend, a trusted supporter and family.

We’re grateful to Lois’s family for honoring her memory and the beautiful relationship she and Brittley shared.

QUARTERLY IMPACT



Summer Recruitment Challenge Complete

We did it!

This summer, our community came together for a BIG challenge: **60 Bigs in 60 Days**. And thanks to an incredible group of volunteers who stepped up, **we met our goal!**

That means **60 more caring adults saying “I’m here” for young people in our community**. Each new Big represents another opportunity for a child to **have a mentor, build confidence, discover new possibilities, and know they have someone in their corner**.

To everyone who answered the call, shared our message, encouraged a friend, or became a Big — **thank you**. You helped make this milestone possible.

And while the challenge may be complete, **the need for mentors continues**.

There are still young people waiting for someone to **step into their corner**.

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

- **Celebration of Mentorship & Belonging**

- October 17
- 8:30–10:00 a.m.
- Groundswell Event Center
- Join us in recognizing our Bigs, Littles, families, and the relationships that make our mentoring community so special. (This event is formerly known as “Big of the Year”)



SAVE

**BIG MAGIC
BREAKFAST**

**MAY 6
2027**

THE

DATE



DOUBLETREE
Downtown Cedar Rapids

**SAVE
the DATE**

BOWL FOR KIDS' SAKE

FEBRUARY 9TH - 26TH

GRAB A FRIEND AND JOIN US ALL MONTH LONG!

**ARE YOU A BIG? JOIN US FOR
MATCH BOWLING:
SATURDAY, FEB 13 @ 12:30
SUNDAY, FEB 21 @ 3:00**



**CEDAR RAPIDS BOWLING
CENTER**