

PRESS RELEASE

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ALL MENTORING IS NOT CREATED EQUAL

Relationship longevity and support makes a difference in adolescent substance use

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (January 14, 2016) – January is National Mentoring Month. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County values and continues its partnership with the Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition because of the impact collaboration can make on our youth. Young people are faced with choices every day just as adults are. Making good choices is always easier when you feel like you have someone on your side. Quality mentoring in long term relationships reduces the likelihood of a young person ever trying drugs, tobacco, or alcohol.

Someone who believes you can be who you want to be is incredibly valuable to young people. As professionals it's important to understand not all mentoring is the same. Referrals for mentors are increasing as more and more social service providers see the significance of mentoring as a positive intervention. Studies show that mentor (Big) to mentee(Little) relationships are effective when the relationship is long term, lasting more than one year, and when the mentor has been trained and supported. Bigs are trained in a variety of areas, receive long term support, and commit to a minimum one year match with a Little. In addition to training, longevity and commitment, Big Brother Big Sisters assesses each candidate through interviews, background checks, and personal reference evaluations to ensure the safety of the Little. We work with families to elicit goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship helping to provide a quality relationship that is organic and natural, improving outcomes for the Little.

Mentoring alone is not the answer to adolescent drug use, which is why professional support is necessary for all mentoring matches. Match Specialists work to support Bigs and Littles in the growth of their relationship, to assist with concerns, and to monitor for intervention needs. This reduces the risks of adolescent drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. Match Specialists are trained to support Bigs and Littles in a wide range of personal areas, but the real difference in outcomes is related to the relationship established between the Big and the Little. This relationship is what helps the Little long term in their ability to make positive choices.

None of this would be possible without community support, but more importantly without Bigs who volunteer to spend at least four hours a month for one year supporting a Little. Each year we celebrate National Mentoring Month with our Mentor Appreciation Breakfast to show our appreciation. This year we look forward to honoring our Bigs on January 30th, 2016 at First United Methodist Church, 275 W. Michigan Ave, Jackson, Michigan 49201. Think back to the person who was always there for you as a child. Take the time this month to thank them for being YOUR mentor!

More information about:

- *Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Ravenn Moore at (517) 796-5133 or via email at ravenn.moore@allegiancehealth.org
- *Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County* and its activities, please contact Melissa Laird at (517) 784-7181 or via email at mlaird@bbbsjackson.org

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