



























2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Defend, Empower, and Ignite Potential

MISSION

To create & support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power & promise of youth.

VISION

To see all youth achieve their full potential.

PASSION

To see all children achieve success in life.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Josette Rider



They say innovation is born from necessity, and 2021 proved that proverb true.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic could have easily brought Big Brothers Big Sisters to a complete standstill. I am proud to say the staff and volunteers, with the support of the Board and

countless donors, decided that the long-term success of the children and families we serve was our top priority. Staff and volunteers pushed through the stress of a nationwide shutdown to provide new resources to our Littles and their families.

In 2021, this spirit of innovation resulted in another additional programs and services to seeing firsthand what the long-term impact of mentoring can do; seeing another Little awarded the Lily Scholarship, a Little getting her white coat, and watching 92% of all our seniors graduate on time. Our staff picked up kids for school, signed them up for credit recovery, and made sure each little was supported and encouraged.

I have always been a person who thinks of the positive and doesn't dwell on the negative. I take a "what if" and "why not" approach. Big Brothers Big Sisters takes the same approach. Instead of saying, "we cannot do what we always did", we asked ourselves what CAN we do with what we have to continue to create and build upon long-term impact for each child in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. The answer is to adjust, course correct, be patient, and look for opportunities. When the schools closed, we opened our building to during the school hours and provided food and educational support. We hired tutors and room monitors.

Students across the nation were falling behind in school and felt isolated from their peers. To combat this, Fort Wayne Community Schools and Big Brothers Big Sisters created Summer School Buddies, a brand-new opportunity for students to catch up before the start of school in the fall and meet with a mentor.

Another summer program was made possible through a groundbreaking donation from NIPSCO, which donated \$50,000 in 2021 to help kick off Conservation Buddies. Through Conservation Buddies, our Littles could be exposed to an all-new set of skills and experiences in environmental education. For some of them, this meant leaving the city for the first time – making S'mores for the first time – camping under the stars for the first time.



The pandemic made meeting inside almost impossible for our matches – so our staff took the meetings outside instead! That's exactly what I mean when I said, "innovation through necessity." Our staff saw a problem, a hole in the bottom of our boat, and they didn't just plug it up and call it a day.

They invented a whole new way to travel.

Speaking of new ways to travel, in 2021 the agency started an unofficial new program — again, because our staff saw a need and decided to fill it. In this case, it was a Little Brother in need of a car. One little brother became two and our Big Brothers Big Sisters community stepped up to the task. In the following pages you'll read about how staff, Bigs, and our community partners

secured steady transportation for our Littles when the pandemic made it harder than ever to get by. "One of those young men would pick up his two friends so that they could all graduate together on time – a pact they made when they were twelve and turned into a reality in 2021.



From advanced volunteer efforts all the way up to brand-new scholarship funds, our community at large spent all of 2021 coming up with new ways to help, mentor, and inspire the youth in our community. In the coming pages you'll read about the Morton family's efforts to bring a Big Brothers Big Sisters scholarship to Kosciusko County, ensuring that more Littles can go on to college after high school. You'll read about Bigs like Andrew and Charita Niedermeyer, who used their passion for the outdoors to initiate a whole new program for our Littles, and you'll read about the many little ways that Big Brothers and Sisters like Bob Gudorf, Sherri and Terry Milton, and Wanda Tiltges stepped up to the plate for their Littles.

But the real stars are our Littles: ZaMarquis, Sky, Gabe, Shaelynn, Parriah, Zandra, Aja, Carson, and our entire Class of 2021 – their stories are in the following pages, brimming with hard work, potential, and a determination to keep going no matter what life throws at them – to keep breaking new ground. Our mission at Big Brothers Big Sisters is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of our youth – a mission that empowers everyone in our community to invest in individual lives leading to positive generational change.

I can't think of any better way to break new ground.

Joseph

Josette Rider, Executive Director

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Phil Henry



Dear Friends of the Agency,

2021 was a year of many highs and lows. I used to like roller coasters but now I'm not so sure!

Never before has the steadfast presence of BBBS in our community been more needed than it was in 2021. With the

pandemic continuing to cause uncertainty from re-opening, then shutting down, re-opening again etc. BBBS was and is one constant that our clients can always rely on.

Our Agency delivered on our Mission in creative and inventive new ways, ensuring best practices for health and safety were always foremost. We successfully navigated through incredible challenges to safely tutor Littles in our program and provide nutrition enhancement, we organized and ran Match Activities to support a safe environment for our Bigs to interact with their Littles, and we worked in an ever-changing environment to somehow host the highest grossing slate of Special Events in our Agency history. YOU stepped up for us and helped make this happen.

But our overall Match numbers are down, sadly, due to the disruption of our traditional model which includes interacting with potential clients and volunteers at community events or company gatherings. In 2021 it was very difficult to gain access through these usual channels and our overall numbers

suffered, which means there are even more kids on our waiting list – kids who each deserve a chance to have a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a caring adult who can enrich their own life while also making an immeasurable impact on the life of one youth. When you positively affect the life of a Little, that effect always multiplies. Our entire community is better off when more kids have a solid foundation and example to follow. This is where you come in. There has never been a better time to make a bigger impact than right now.

Looking forward, we have exciting plans in place to recover our Match numbers and to support new and existing matches even better than before. We are supporting our Staff by working to remain an Employer of Choice in our region. And finally, we are focusing on stewardship of the relationships with our community of donors we are so blessed to call our friends. I can't wait to update you next year on the tremendous results these initiatives achieve.

Oh yeah, and we are having a huge Birthday Party as the Agency turns 50 in 2022!

See you there,

Phil Henry, Board President

Pholluny



Board Leadership BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF NORTHEAST INDIANA

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Phil Henry



VICE PRESIDENT Laura Antil



Chris Johnson



Todd Hollman



Jake Fetters





Becker



Bostic



Byers



Farias



Hoffman





Huttenlocker



Lockwood



Marshall



McGlown



Miller



Laura Kapp Miller







Owen



Rintz



Schenkel





Wesner

Wever



Yesh











START SMALL, GIVE BIG, 2020 SKY RODRIGUEZ Fort Wayne, IN

Thank you to: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana Fort Wayne Downtown Improvement District Sponsors of Art This Way





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BBBS partnered with Art This Way to bring to life a mural painted by former Little Sister Sky Rodriguez to celebrate the love and support between Bigs and Littles.

This mural now stands at 222 Pearl Street and features two hands clasped together in a pinky promise while forming the American Sign Language sign for love. Flowers surround the two hands, representing birth to a new relationship that continues to grow, while color-coded diamonds in the background represent the concept of 'forever,' like the bond between a Big and Little which never fades.

THERE WERE SIX PIECES OF LEGISLATION ON THE TABLE.

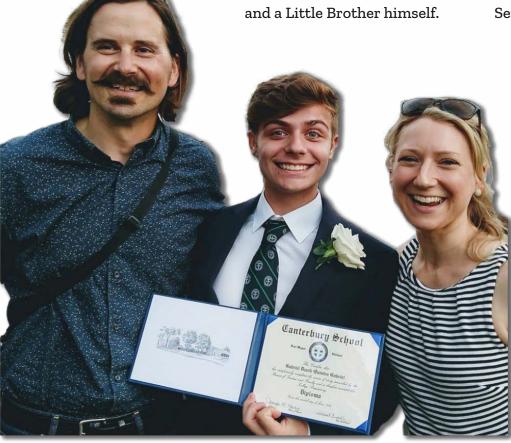


One of those was the **Foster Youth Mentoring Act**,

which would expand funding to organizations such as BBBS which provide mentoring services to youth in foster care. Of the speakers gathered before Indiana Senators Todd Young and Mike Braun that day, one of them was a foster child and a Little Brother bimself.



At age 19, Little Brother Gabe had just graduated from Canterbury and entered Indiana University to study international relations. Highly intelligent, with a natural spark for public speaking and personal experience of foster care, Gabe was the perfect candidate to persuade the Senators in the Act's favor.



Scan this QR Code to read about



H.R.3083 Foster Youth Mentoring Act of 2021

Big Brother Vince, Little Brother Gabe, Big Sister Rachel

As Gabe pointed out, people with mentors such as those provided by BBBS are 55% more likely to enroll in college.

This isn't the first time he's spoken about his experiences as a part of Big Brothers Big Sisters, but it might end up being one of the most important. "I was just glad to be able to pay it forward," he said. "Now seeing so many people go into the mentoring program and the fight for funding among all these advocates, I didn't realize how much went into building my relationship with Vince right off the bat. Now that I understand that, it was my honor to be able to help push that into the future."



Little Brother ZaMarquis, Tom Kelley, and Josette Rider

LITTLES ON THE PEDAL

17-year-old Little Brother ZaMarquis and his struggle to find a reliable vehicle for work.

ZaMarquis had saved his money up while working 40-plus hours a week at Hardee's to support his family and simultaneously finishing his senior year at South Side High School. But when he purchased a car from a local used lot, the vehicle broke down almost instantly. Luckily for ZaMarquis, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Tom Kelley of Kelley Auto Group had his back.

CEO Josette Rider started a GoFundMe page with a \$8,000 goal to raise funds for ZaMarquis's new car, while Tom Kelley sent his associates to locate the most reliable vehicle they could find. Soon they were able to present ZaMarquis with a fully-inspected 2012 Volkswagen Passat, a vehicle which served ZaMarquis well not just through his last year of high school but into college and beyond.

This spirit of giving soon inspired **Big Brother Bob Gudorf**, who retired from the Classic Trophy ownership group and has served as Glenbrook Square's Santa Claus for the last five years. Through their years-long match, Bob guided **Little Brother Nick** through high school graduation and into the business management program at Purdue Fort Wayne. In winter of 2020, Nick ran into a spot of trouble when his already-limping vehicle wheezed its last breath.



Little Brother Nick and Big Brother Bob

The cost to fix Nick's used car would have been more than the vehicle was worth. For months, he caught rides to work from friends, coworkers, and his mother – and when he couldn't find a ride, he had to walk.

Inspired by the story of ZaMarquis, Bob teamed up with Don Ayres Honda of Fort Wayne and located a **2007 Toyota Camry** that had been taken care of well by its previous owners. With the help and generosity of Don Ayres, Bob was able to secure the car — and a lifetime of free oil changes — for his Little Brother, Nick. "I just

thought, 'Good God, he's going to get into more debt,' which he doesn't need," Bob said. "I talked to my wife, Karen, about loaning him the money, but she said, 'Why

don't you just buy it for him.' I think I did the right thing. He was so thankful, and I got a nice hug out of it.

"The best feeling in the world is giving." —Big Brother Bob







Through two years of anxiety and lockdowns, the class of 2021 persevered. These Littles overcame the stress of virtual learning in a global pandemic and broke through to the other side – a future full of bright opportunities and unprecedented accomplishments. We are proud and honored to celebrate their graduation with them.

Congratulations, Graduates!

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF NORTHEAST INDIANA IS THANKFUL FOR OUR SPONSORS, PARTNERS, AND DONORS WHO HAVE MADE BIG FUTURES PROGRAMMING POSSIBLE.

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:



FOR EMPOWERING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE CHILDREN WE SERVE.



Annalizia Alberson NORTHROP HIGH SCHOOL



Destiny Ellington HOMESTEAD HIGH SCHOOL



DreShawn Jones NORTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



ZaMarquis Reynolds SOUTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Malik Smith NORTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Joni Armstrong DEKALB HIGH SCHOOL



COLUMBIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



Mela Carter **WAYNE HIGH SCHOOL**



Cierra Craig SOUTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Tanisha Doughty WAYNE HIGH SCHOOL



JaNila Fitts-Sewell **NEW TECH ACADEMY**



Da'Jon Fitzgerald SNIDER HIGH SCHOOL



Andrew Gillespie HUNTINGTON NORTH HIGH SCHOOL



Rachel Greider HOMESTEAD HIGH SCHOOL



Jalen Hall **NEW TECH ACADEMY**



Hunter Littleton WARSAW COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL



Sean Luthy NORTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Timothy McDonough CONCORDIA LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL



Lanard McGraw SOUTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Selena Ramsey NORTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Ashley Saldana SNIDER HIGH SCHOOL



Trevin Scott NEW TECH ACADEMY



Reanna Shelton SNIDER HIGH SCHOOL



Reakus Shelton SNIDER HIGH SCHOOL



Joshua Sills WARSAW COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL



Mytia Toungage SOUTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Kaitlyn White COLUMBIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



Aja Wilson NORTH SIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Kelly Wilson SNIDER HIGH SCHOOL



James Wimes ANTHIS CAREER ACADEMY



Big Sister Vicki Morton Big Brother Bill M

THE BIG BROTHER
BIG SISTERS

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DURING THEIR YEARS OF VOLUNTEER WORK

with the Kosciusko Community Foundation, Bill and Vicki Morton spent a lot of time reviewing scholarship applications, and they noticed one concerning trend:

THE CRITERIA FOR MANY SCHOLARSHIPS FUNDAMENTALLY EXCLUDED LITTLE BROTHERS & SISTERS, WHO OFTEN DIDN'T HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTRACURRICULARS AS OTHER STUDENTS

Bill and Vicki have put in several years of hard work as Bigs themselves, and they know how difficult it can be for Littles just to graduate high school, let alone participate in the sports and volunteer work necessary for competitive scholarships.



IN 2019, THE MORTONS RESOLVED TO CHANGE This by funding their own scholarship, Which is open to donations from the public.

From a pool of graduating Kosciusko Littles, the Mortons would select one or two high schoolers to receive a scholarship of \$1,000 or \$2,000 each.

Applicants can be a graduating high school senior, a nontraditional student or a student currently enrolled in college, technical or vocational programs.

Kosciusko County Littles and previous awardees get first priority, but the pool will open to Northeast Indiana Littles if there are no suitable local candidates.

In 2021, this scholarship went into effect for the first time and \$1,000 was awarded to Little Sister Phoenyx.



In 2022, the honor went to Little Sister Marissa, who graduated high school early and will move on to Ball State University in the fall.

Littles don't just lack opportunities to volunteer and join school clubs. They also often lack a parent or guardian willing or able to help them through the application process. This is where Bigs come into play!

A helping hand from a trusted adult might be the only difference between a Little who goes to college on full scholarship and a Little who doesn't go to college at all.

Now that Bill and Vicki have taken care of one scholarship fund,

"WHAT WE NEED MOST ARE VOLUNTEERS
WHO WILL HELP OUR LITTLES REACH
THEIR FULL POTENTIAL!"

-Big Brother Bill & Big Sister Vicki

LITTLE SISTER AJA

2021 Recipient

Lilly Endowment Scholarship

ITRY NOT TO RELAX TOO MUCH BECAUSE ONCE YOU BECOME COMFORTABLE, YOU START TO BECOME AVERAGE, AND I DON'T EVER WANT TO BECOME AVERAGE.'

After a lifetime of adversity and countless last-minute family moves, Aja is determined to fulfill two dreams, both inspired by her mentors: Mike Brevard (Northside Football coach), and Lindsey Foust (Northside Athletic Trainer). Her Big Sister, Elena Wood, would often attend Aja's softball games to support. Aja plans to become a football coach and elementary school teacher in the future.



earned at the young age of 17, Aja has a full ride to any state university or college of her choice. For her, football is the career of choice, and University of Saint Francis is the school. It also just happens to be the same school where Brevard and Foust will start as full-time staff this year, although Aja didn't know that at the time.

"She's special," Foust said.

"Aja is a very bright light in a dark place. With everything this girl has been handed in her life and all the adversity, she doesn't lose her spirit. She's the first person to step up and help somebody else out. She has the biggest heart I have ever seen. You would never know what she's gone through by being around her."

The Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship program is designed to raise the level of educational attainment in Indiana, increase awareness of the beneficial roles Indiana community foundations can play in their communities and encourage efforts of Lilly Endowment Community Scholars to engage with each other and with state leaders to improve quality of life in Indiana. To do this, it offers a full-ride scholarship to a student to attend any Indiana college.

We are proud to congratulate Little Sister Aja as our THIRD & LATEST Lilly Scholar Recipient!





An innovative new program kicked off in Indiana this year with Conservation Buddies, an outdoor education program which aims to educate Littles about wildlife conservation and hunting safety while also providing kids with the opportunity to get out of the city and enjoy the great outdoors.

Headed by Big Couple Andrew and Charita Niedermeyer and by former Little Brother Brad Miller and his Big Brother Dewey Forbes, Conservation Buddies was made possible through a generous grant from NIPSCO and features year-round programs and one big overnight camping event for 50 matches.

In the summer of 2021 Brad invited Bigs and Littles to his hunting lodge for the first-ever Brad Miller Campout. Here campers ages 8-22 years old were given the chance to explore nature, sleep under the stars, swim in the lake and learn conservation-related skills such as responsible hunting and fishing, habitat maintenance/restoration, gun safety, and planting 101.

When he was a Little Brother, Brad treasured his opportunities to hunt and fish on Dewey Forbes' sprawling property. Now, with the help of NIPSCO, the Niedermeyers, and the whole Big Brothers Big Sisters community, Brad gets to pass that excitement and valuable educational experience on to every Little in Northeast Indiana!





BBBSNEI GOES VIRTUAL

Each year, BBBS recognizes its outstanding and dedicated volunteers through two events: the Volunteer Recognition Dinner and the Women's Champagne Brunch.



In 2020, the COVID pandemic shoved both events off the itinerary, but in 2021, we got back on our feet and hosted both events ... safely and virtually!

For the first time, both events were hosted online and in person, with volunteers recognized in a cyberspace celebration. "Mimosas for Matches" featured a silent auction, door prizes, party favors, and a grand prize drawing, all from a safe distance.

Mimosas for Matches

The champagne brand might have varied from home to home, and some of our volunteers may have feasted on microwaved meals instead of the traditional Casa Ristorante dinner, but the smiles were as big as ever, and the recognition was more than deserved as our volunteers fought through the pandemic to continue providing high levels of service and mentorship to youth in need.



















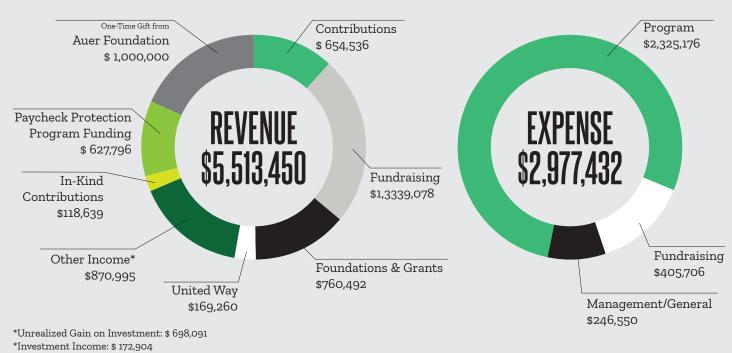




COVID HURT EVERYONE, BUT IT HURT OUR KIDS THE MOST.

During the school year, Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteers meet once per week with students identified by their teachers as in need of extra help. In 2021, we extended the program to the summer months, with volunteers meeting their School Buddies at Blackhawk or Memorial Park once a week during lunch time. This strengthens the Little's support system and extends their friendship with a Big into the long summer months when children often feel adrift and alone. The program is designed to help get kids on track and build momentum before school starts back up in the fall.

2021 FINANCIAL DATA

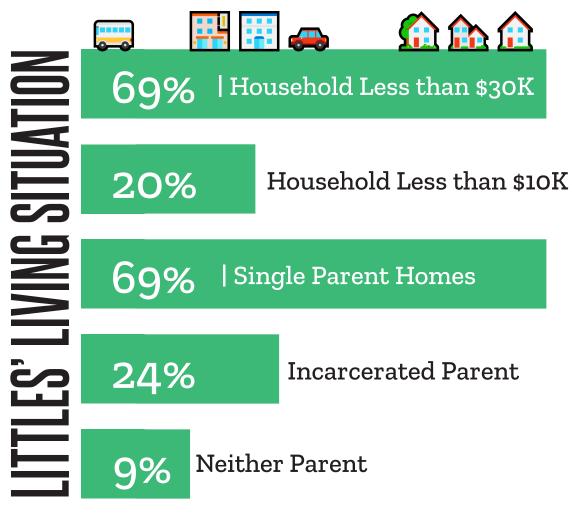


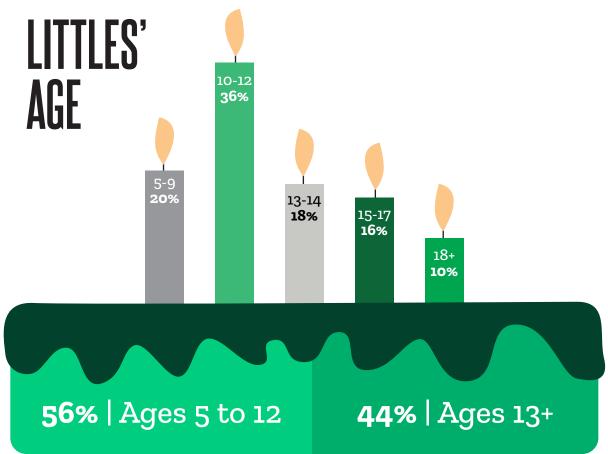
2021 Total Net Assets: \$8,383,432 (includes unrealized gains & losses)

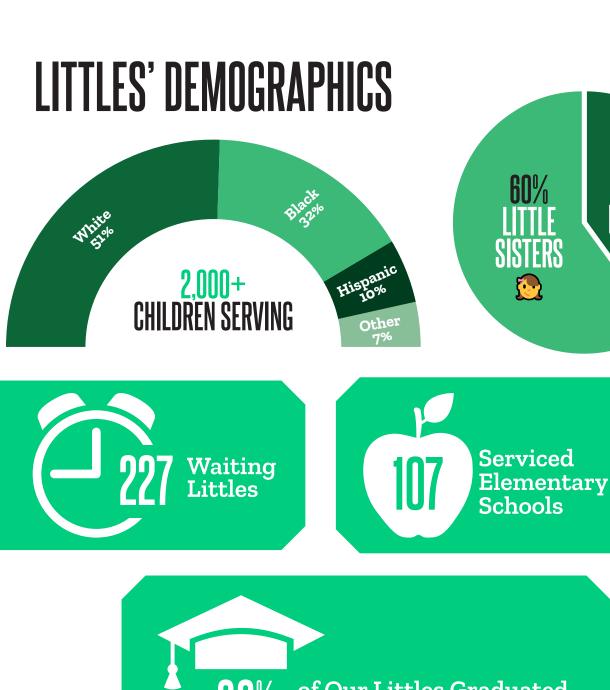
SERVING YOUTH WITH THE GREATEST NEED ARE LEAST OPPORTUNITY











LITTLE

BROTHERS



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MAGIC MAKERS

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Schoon, Rodney &

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Viggiano, Nick & Stacy

Wagner-Meinert, LLC

Vagner, Karen

WFFT Fox 55

Wolf, Virginia

Swiss Re

UAW 2209

Squier, Richard

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Smith, Adam

Staton Cliff & Veisa Strahm Group Streich, Joshua & Erii Stuczynski. Eric & Target Teacher's Credit Ternet, Kimb Therma-Tru Thomas, Toby & TJ Nowak Supply Trademark Plastics Trokic, Natalija Trover, Loren & Tucker, Scott & Vanlaninghan Denise & Rodner Vape Ventures LL Vocera Corporate Voorhies, Jason Warsaw Vape, LLC Waterman, Courtner

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Karch, Johnathar Karns, Kayla Keebler, Mason Kelley, Charles & Adelman, Carol & Kendall Electric Kintz, John & Lesley Aegis Sales & Klein, Dave & An Knapke, James Agee, Tadeja & Neal Krebs, Amy Andorfer, Mark & Kroger Community Rewards Antil. James & Laur Krueckeberg Auct & Realty, LLC Antisdel, Tom Bailey, Corey KSM Business Services, INC Bash, Karen Ladd. Jeff & Coring Beacon Credit Union Lane, Aaron & Janell Bergdoll, Shannor Lasko, Kaitlyn & Colir Bienz, Matt. Leesburg Volunteer Bippus State Bank Fire Dept Bishop, Garv Leeuw, Christopher & Christina Bitting, Brandon Lehman Randall Blackburn & Gree Leslie, James Blomenberg, Timothy & Kristine Lockwood, Chase & RNR Earthwork Inc Loechner, Allen Bodiker, Michael Lombardo Chiropractic PC Bowen Center Lyons, Perry & Denis Boykins, Dane Machielson, Allen & Bridges, Sandra Brita, Bernie Magdy, Jackson Brockmann, Jeff Maggard, Kent & Karen Brooks Andrew Magnuson, Christin Brooks, Eric Brouwer, Allen & Rachael MainStay Solutions, Malloy, Christophe & Molly Brown, Chelsea Brown, Dale & Sheil Marcuccilli, Kristir Buchanan Hauling & Marcuccilli, Tho & Joan Rigging, Inc. Bultemeier, Brad Marshall, Alex Rurns Britnee Marshall, John & Busse, Aaron Angela Buttermore, Nick & Melissa Maumee Metal Recycling BZW Master Painters C.M. Sloan & Sons

Meade, Michael

Meintel, Norman & Elizabeth

Miller Todd & Laura

Moore, Alan Moore, Natha Morton Victoria 8 Moudy, Kenneth & Mundy, Amanda Musgrave, John Nader, Michael & Nichols, Jill Niles, Tyson & Juli

Dazey, Matt & Sarah

Delp Family Charitable Fund

Doc Dancer Inc

Don Fruchey Inc

Dulin, Ward & DeWald, Inc.

Dyer, David &

Earls, Michael &

Eckhart, Matt

Ellis, Marsha

First Bank of Berne

Fortman, Michael

Freiburger, John

Galecki Financial Management, Inc

Graybar Electric

Harshberger, Scottie

Hartman, Troy & Michelle

Harvey, Eric & Jenr

Henry, Matthew

Hollar, Zane

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Jave, Jeff

Jackson, Jeffry &

JEM Family Fund

Johnson Thomas

Jones, Andrew

Jendco Technologie

Kaiser Tool Compan

Hess, Timothy &

Hoagburg, Susan &

Hoosier Pattern In-

J Teders Carpentry

Goeglein, Grant & Jil

Garman, Erin

Haffner, Tim

Franks, Troy & Car

Noack Jacob & Sarak Noble Travel Noland, Lau Northeastern REMO Paragon Medical Patterson, Taylor Pavelec, Charles & Person Centered Case Peterson, Danielle Phillips, Rick & Platinum Resta ared Services LLC Polk, Christopher Polk, Timothy & Lili Precision Comfort

Ramsey, Todd Redi Fli Designs Richardson Dian Roberson, John & Roberts, Jeffrey & Robertson, Richard & Debra Robinson, Dan &

Rogers, Benjamin & Rome City School Ryan, Daniel Salerno, Luca Schoon, Aaron & Schoon, Ben & Am Schultheis Enterprises, Inc Schultheis, David & Seely Office Solutions Sermersheim, Luke & Kristen Sibert, Richard & Skaggs, Kvle South Milford Church of Christ Square Inc Stallings, Alisa Steuben County United Way, Inc Stewart Brimne Peters & Lear Stoops Freightline Quality Trailer, Inc Strack, Patrick & Nici Strnad, Brad & Kir Stuczynski, Edmund & Theresa Sturges Property Group

Stutzman, Arlene

Summit City Chapter VMCCA

Swihart, Andrew &

Swing, Embe

Team Quality Services, Inc

Thunderbowl

Thompson, James & Toni

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Terry and his Little Brother
Carson both know what it's like
to lose a mother. Carson's mom
had just been diagnosed with
Stage 4 cancer when he met
Terry for the first time, and
Terry lost his own mother when
he was only fourteen. He was
uniquely situated to understand
Carson's struggle.

"I thought if anyone was going to be his Big Brother, it should be me," Terry said. "The first day I met Carson, we instantly connected. He was so quiet, but he had this big cheesy look on his face when I walked into his home. That look told me just how much he needed a friend." Carson and Terry quickly realized they had a lot in common. They shared a love of sports and a favorite football team, the Green Bay Packers.

During their first year together, they attended as many high school football games and pro baseball games as they could, saw a lot of movies, and even went flying together. But after a little more than a year together, Carson's mother succumbed to cancer and passed away.

"As you can imagine this was a very difficult time for Carson and his family. It was also a difficult time for me as well," said Terry. "It brought back a lot of childhood memories of my own mother's death. I did the best I could to say the right things and to let Carson know that I was there for him if he needed to talk or just hang out."

Before his mother died, Carson was a great student, but afterward, he started to slip. He learned to mask his pain with laughter and became the class clown, more focused on making people smile rather than getting good grades. Terry understood perfectly; he'd been through the same thing as a kid. But how could he explain to a teenage boy that he didn't have to act macho or make people laugh all the time? In the end, it wasn't a lesson Terry had to teach intentionally. It was a lesson Carson learned just by watching his Big Brother.



"One time, we went to the shooting range with my aunt and uncle, and we were all shooting shot-put," said Carson. "The rifles were kicking so hard it was definitely going to bruise, but I told myself to just grin and bear it, and not to let anyone know I was hurt. Then I turned around and what did I see? Terry, padding his shoulder with a towel. When I caught him, he wasn't embarrassed. He just grinned, and it was like a lightswitch went off in my head. I didn't have to hide my feelings; I didn't have to pretend I wasn't in pain."

When it came to Carson's schoolwork, Terry was gentle and patient, and over the years Cason realized he didn't have to act out or put on a mask. He could just be himself, and Terry would still like him, no matter what.

"If I never had a Big, I know I would have fallen in with the wrong crowd. I wouldn't have just felt like I had to be funny. I would have wanted to prove I was tough, too, like being mean and violent during the day could hide the fact that I was crying myself to sleep at night," said Carson. "My grades would have tanked, at the very least. But just by being there for me, Terry prevented that."

With the pandemic came new challenges – not just virtual learning, but also the unexpected news that Carson, at age 17, was about to become a father. At first, Carson and Terry shared a certain amount of shame at this news. Carson felt like he'd messed up badly; Terry saw it as a failing on his part as Carson's mentor. He was supposed to guide Carson to college and a professional football career, not to fatherhood at such a young age! But Carson's shame subsided when Terry and his grandmother accepted the news and helped him work out a plan without judgment.

As for Terry, as he worked with Carson to secure employment and a diploma, he came to understand that his shame was misplaced. This wasn't a failing – not for him and not for Carson. In fact, when they conquered this new challenge together, Terry realized it was the opposite of a failure.

"Carson was growing, and I'd grown with him," Terry said. "He stepped up to the plate; he had a vast support system now that he didn't have when we were first matched, when his mother had



just passed and he felt like he would be alone forever. And now I had not just a son, but a granddaughter as well." Carson may never play professional football, but he'll always know that he can drop in at Terry's place and watch a game. He may not have a mother, but his grandmother will be there to remind him to take a coat when it's cold outside. When all else fails, he'll have Terry to buy him a jacket from the concessions stands, as Terry did when Carson was a boy.

"And when we're gone," said Terry, "he'll take the love we've given him and pass it on to his baby girl. That's the future I want for him; I'll take that over professional football any day."





Before Little Sister Zandra was matched with Wanda Tiltges, she didn't think of adults as trustworthy, responsible people. By the age of eleven, Zandra felt like she'd spent most of her life being an adult herself. She took care of her disabled sister night and day, administering medication, monitoring life signs, and sleeping in the living room where she could be sure to wake up quickly if her sister needed her.

Big Sister Wanda wasn't just a role model. She was the first

adult in Zandra's life who truly let her be a kid. Whether they went on trips to roller coaster parks or just stayed home and played board games, Zandra knew her time with Wanda was a chance to relax, without adult responsibilities – a chance to have a normal life, eat candy, have fun, and be a child.

Those were rare, precious moments for Zandra, and they were sorely needed. When she was twelve, Zandra's already-stressful life took a turn for the worse when her baby

sister lost her battle with long-term disability and illness. For Zandra, it was like losing her own child – and for Big Sister Wanda, it seemed like too much for a volunteer mentor to handle on her own. From Wanda's point of view, Zandra didn't just need someone to hang out with. She needed a bigger home; loving, supportive parents; a steady income stream; and more than anything, she needed her baby sister back.

Wanda couldn't provide any of these things. Sometimes, she felt

like a failure for that. Taking
Zandra out for ice cream or
staying in to watch a movie felt
woefully inadequate considering
all the hardships Zandra faced
outside the comforting shelter
of Wanda's home. In addition
to all her stressors, Zandra was
struggling with schoolwork in a
noisy, crowded home that made
e-learning virtually impossible
during the pandemic, and no one
in her family had ever graduated
high school before.



Wanda couldn't whisk Zandra away from home, magically change her grades, or bring her baby sister back to life. But she did what she could: she gifted Zandra with new experiences, traveling with her to Chicago and taking her on her first train ride, her first roller coaster, and to her first museum. She offered up her home as a safe, quiet place to study and found tutoring to make sure Zandra would be the first person in her family to graduate. She shared meals and laughter with her Little Sister.

And gradually, Wanda noticed a change.

"When Zandra struggled in school, she came to me for help,"

Wanda said. "Instead of withdrawing into her own depression, she came to me with ideas for outdoor activities we could do together. Although she never hesitated to share her darkest feelings with me, gradually the tears we both shed were replaced by smiles, and I got to know Zandra not as the mini-adult she'd been at eleven, but as the goofy, intelligent, fun-loving child she'd never been allowed to be." At the same time, by watching her Big Sister, Zandra learned two things: first, that some adults are indeed trustworthy and competent enough to rely on when she needed help; and second, that Zandra had the power to make her situation change. She didn't need to be stuck at home forever, caring for her younger siblings. Her life and her future – were her own to decide.

With Wanda's help, Zandra was able to graduate high school while working and training for management at Taco Bell. She saved up for her first car, sought and obtained emancipation from her parents, met with military recruiters, and finally decided to join the U.S. Marines.

"With the Marines, I'll always have food on the table and money in the bank," said Zandra. "In the toughest branch of the military, I'll be secure in the fact that no one can walk over me like they did when I was a kid. And I know that I can protect the people I love and keep them safe, too. All of these things seemed impossible to me when I was 12 years old. Wanda helped me see

that it wasn't just possible, but also within my reach. All I had to do was make the choice and see it through."

"What I've learned from



Zandra is that the true extent of suffering some children go through is almost unfathomable to those of us who grew up with healthy home lives," said Big Sister Wanda. "Sometimes it can feel like we're unequipped to help, but Zandra showed me that the opposite is true. Just being there for a child can show them that the world is bigger than their parents' house. There is a life outside the front door, and it might hurt sometimes, but it's also beautiful and free and full of choice"



2021 BIG COUPLE OF THE YEAR BIG COUPLE KIM & BRIAN TERNET LITTLE BROTHER DYLAN

Matched Since 2018

Little Brother Dylan was a quiet loner when he met Big Couple Brian and Kim Ternet in 2018. He did well in school, but he wasn't interested in any school activities and struggled to make friends. Dylan's mother hoped Big Brothers Big Sisters could help him feel comfortable with himself and strengthen his self-esteem. Ideally, his mentors could also introduce Dylan to new activities and give him the friendship and fun he so badly needed.

Luckily for Dylan, Brian and Kim were able to provide all of the above and more.

Whether they attended local events or just hung out at the Ternet family home, Brian and Kim were constantly exposing Dylan to new experiences.



At the same time, they provided emotional support by engaging Dylan in serious discussions about academic success and high school. When they noticed Dylan's interest in engineering and his high grades in math and science, they signed him up for the agency's STEM events, where for the first time Dylan found something he was truly passionate about.



Since the match started, Dylan has changed from a shy, lonely kid to a confident social leader with close friendships and a diverse range of interests. At Big Brothers Big Sisters events, Dylan is always quick to step forward and lead the other children through shared activities. He's become more comfortable, more confident, more mature, and is well on his way to a positive path in the future. His mother notes he speaks differently to adults now: more respectful, but at the same



time, more firm in his beliefs, and not afraid to stand up for himself.

Kim and Brian simultaneously explored other ways to support the mission as a whole, not just their Little Brother. Big Brother Brian participated in Real Men Read, while Big Sister Kim served on the Gourmet Brunch committee, and the couple together promoted Big Brothers Big Sisters in their community and workplaces while also finding time to support fundraising efforts. All while keeping an eye on their Little Brother and his needs!

"I wouldn't change anything about the match," said Dylan with a big smile. "We have a shared happiness."

2021 SCHOOL BUDDY OF THE YEAR BIG SISTER MISHA THOMAS LITTLE SISTER SHAELYNN

Matched Since 2018



When they matched in 2018, Allen County's Misha Thomas realized her Little Sister Shaelynn needed consistency, time, and attention during their meetings.

Together they work on Shaelynn's math homework and play games, and while the pandemic briefly put their relationship on hold, Big Sister Misha was standing outside the school gates with games in hand, ready to greet Shaelynn the first day guests were allowed back in.

She always makes sure to show up consistently and has become a reliable source of warmth and friendship for Shaelynn.

2021 REAL MEN READER OF THE YEAR BILL SMITH

Reading Since 2010



Real Men Reader of the Year Bill Smith always makes an extra effort. That's why his classrooms see him not just as a mentor, but as a grandpa!

For ten years, Bill has visited classrooms and he always makes sure to bring something extra to share with students. Whether it's an artifact related to the book he's reading or a special story about his own life to drive home the book's themes. Sometimes Bill even dresses up as the main character to keep his students engaged.

"He makes sure all questions are answered and he shares lots of background knowledge and personal experiences with the kids, so they can make connections to the stories," shared one of Bill's classroom teachers. "It's obvious Bill loves the kids and they love him!"



2021 DIANE HUMPHREY AWARD RECIPIENT

Charita Niedermeyer

The Diane Humphrey Award recognizes women who demonstrate passionate volunteerism, strong community leadership, and a lifelong commitment to serving others. Through her years of service to the organization, Charita Niedermeyer has embodied all three ideals to a tee.

Charita became a Big Sister in 2005 and has treated every Little Sister she matched with like family. In 2021, the Conservation Buddies program was inspired by Charita and her husband Andrew. Their combined love for the great outdoors, and in particular Charita's outgoing and fun-loving nature, inspired a new busy calendar of events for Littles revolving around outdoor survival skills, hunting, fishing, camping and conservation. Charita takes a vital role in this program, spearheading events on a busy schedule to ensure Littles across Northeast Indiana get to make the most of warm weather. Her boundless energy and infectious smile make everyone around her feel engaged and welcome.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is proud to celebrate and recognize Charita Niedermeyer for her outstanding leadership with the 2021 Diane Humphrey Award.

2021 DON WOLF AWARD RECIPIENT Rod Schoon

As the founder of Ashley Industrial Molding, Rod Schoon's involvement with the agency began in 2009 when he was invited to his first Gourmet Dinner and heard a Little Brother's inspiring testimony. He joined the Board of Directors in 2012, but his service to the agency goes far beyond the board room. His passion for the mission is infectious and he continuously challenges everyone he knows to get involved.

The Don Wolf Award was established in 1999 and is given to an individual or individuals in recognition of commitment and contribution to youth in our community. Don Wolf, long-time CEO of Do it Best Corporation (formerly HWI), was primarily responsible for bringing Big Brothers Big Sisters to Northeast Indiana in 1972.

Since that time, Don served as a devoted supporter and benefactor of Big Brothers Big Sisters and was a past board president of both local and national boards.





2021 CHARLES D. SMITH AWARD RECIPIENT Sherri & Terry Milton

Few people live out the mission of BBBS as fully as Sherri and Terry Milton, who formally adopted their Little Sister Parriah when her mother terminated her parental rights. Even before this massive step, Terry and Sherri were stand-outs in the mentorship world, forming close bonds with their Littles Sarah and Carson, and giving back to the community in every way they could.

Caring, generous, and driven, the Miltons embody everything the Big Brothers Big Sisters mission stands for. With their dedication to mentorship and above-and-beyond involvement in their Littles' lives, they were, together, the obvious choice for the 2021 Charles D. Smith Award, which was established in 2015 and recognizes those who demonstrate passionate volunteerism, strong community leadership and a lifelong commitment to serving others.

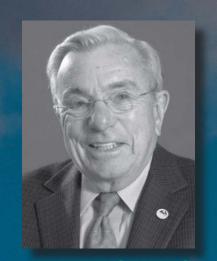




LITTLE BROTHER AARON

2004 - 2021

Aaron was a hardworking and fiercely intelligent young man before he tragically passed away in his sleep at the young age of 16. Aaron enjoyed learning about STEM and working at Rally's, and had plans to join the medical field after high school. Aaron was kind, ambitious, and goal-oriented. He cared deeply for his Big Brother Luke Nathalang and will be sorely missed.



JR. MIKE MASTRANGELO

1927 - 2021

From his medical career all the way through retirement, Dr. Mastrangelo prioritized one thing above all else: service to the community. Through his organization Matthew 25 and his support of BBBS, Dr. Mastrangelo embodied the Don Wolf ideals and managed to do so while also being a loving, caring family man.

#BBBSNEI #DefendersOfPotential



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1005 W. Rudisill Blvd. Fort Wayne, IN 46807

> 260.456.1600 www.BBBSNEI.org