

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana Celebrates 45 Years of Helping Area Youth Reach Their Full Potential

More than 9,000 youth served since 1979 with over 216,000 hours of mentoring; agency programming expanded into seven parishes

LAKE CHARLES, LA, UNITED STATES, September 5, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana](#), the region's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, is marking 45 years of service to the youth of Southwest Louisiana. What started as a small, sponsored program of Family & Youth in 1979, is now a thriving independent agency serving seven parishes with one core belief – inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life.



The agency has experienced remarkable growth over more than four decades with major achievements including:

- Supporting more than 9,000 youth with over 216,000 hours of mentoring.
- Expanding programming into seven parishes and growing staff from five to thirteen employees.
- Launching Bigs with Badges in partnership with the DeRidder Police Department and Beauregard Parish Sheriff's Office.
- Launching Operation Big in partnership with Fort Johnson/JRTC in Vernon Parish.
- Named Nonprofit of the Year by Fusion Five in 2023 and Board of the Year in 2022 for Small/Mid Affiliates by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

[Erin Davison, MBA](#) took over as CEO of the agency in 2017 and has been at the helm of tremendous expansion and change, shepherding the organization through four federally declared natural disasters and a pandemic. Against daunting odds, she was able to financially

sustain mentoring programs, introduce innovative technology for enrollment and mentoring practices, implement efficiencies for service and delivery, and create MentorU, a curriculum based group mentoring and one-to-one program in Calcasieu Parish. She counts a transformative \$1.1 million donation from the MacKenzie Scott Foundation as one of her proudest achievements, using the unexpected donation to seed an endowment named the [Big Defender Fund](#) to diversify funding and future proof the organization from additional disruptive natural disasters and unexpected threats to critical youth mentoring programs.

Davison finds daily inspiration in the thousands of young people the agency has served over the years. She says, "Our legacy of mentoring includes over 216,000 hours of spending time supporting youth who need us the most." She adds, "Fast forward 45 years and the Littles we mentored are now thriving in their communities. Many are teachers, law officers, and business owners, proving that spending time with kids during their formative years provides positive pathways for future success and empowerment."



It takes just a few hours of friendship per month to change a child's future for the better.

Commander Cinnamon Salvador with the Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office has a unique view on the tremendous growth and success of mentoring programs. She currently serves on the board

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Erin Davison, Big Brothers Big Sisters of SWLA CEO

of directors for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana, but 45 years ago she was one of the organization's early matches. “At ten years old I was matched with my Big Sister. Sharon taught me how to bake and do cross stitch and needlepoint and was a steady presence in my life for years as a role model who offered a unique perspective,” said Salvador. She adds, “With parents working all the time to make ends meet, it's more important than ever that there is someone else to care about our children and spend time with them. It helps

young people appreciate their parents more and benefits the entire community.”

It's a sentiment echoed by Calcasieu Parish Sheriff Gary 'Stitch' Guillory. “At CPSO we firmly believe in the power of mentorship to shape young lives.” He adds, “For 45 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana has been a beacon of hope and guidance for our youth, helping them achieve success and realize their full potential. We have always supported this

invaluable organization, and we are proud to continue standing alongside them in their mission to create a brighter future for the children of our community."

Big Brothers Big Sisters relies heavily on community support to make sure that all youth in Southwest Louisiana reach their full potential. Lacy Viator is the 2024 board chair and says, "I'm proud to be part of a strong organization dedicated to integrity, transparency, and commitment to our youth." She adds, "It's incredible to witness firsthand the positive impact Big Brothers Big Sisters has made over 45 years in Southwest Louisiana."



CEO Erin Davison credits community support, an engaged board of directors, and dedicated staff for the agency's growth and success mentoring young people. Location: Bowl For Kids' Sake 2024

Calcasieu Parish Police Jury President Anthony Bartie also spoke about the importance of the agency and its innovative mentoring programs saying, "The work they perform and the miracles they create are an inspiration to us here at the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury." He adds, "We pledge to continue our unwavering support of this great organization and join all of Southwest Louisiana in congratulating them on this tremendous occasion."

You can support Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana by volunteering to become a Big for just a few hours, a couple of times a month. There are more than 90 Littles on the waiting list in Southwest Louisiana to be matched. Big Brothers, especially men of color, are in high demand. You can also impact a child's life by donating to the Big Defender Fund via the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, or by attending one of the agency's fundraising events held throughout the year. Visit bbbsswla.org for more information.

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About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana (BBBS SWLA) is celebrating 45 years (1979-2024) of facilitating meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers and children ages 6-18 in Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jeff Davis, and Vernon parishes. The region's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network has a proud history of defending the potential of marginalized youth by creating and growing innovative mentoring programs with a focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI).

BBBS of SWLA believes that one-to-one mentoring relationships will ignite the power and promise of youth so they can achieve their full potential.

For more information visit www.bbbsswla.org .

Media Contact

To schedule an interview or to request images, logos, or more information please contact:

Kerry Andersen – Empire Consulting

kerry@empireconsultingla.org or 337.292.0725

Kerry Andersen

Empire Consulting LLC

+1 337-292-0725

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