

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado Spotlights Mentorship as a Strategy for Stronger Colorado Communities on 8/27 Gala

The Big Little Gala will elevate youth voices and advance mentorship as an investment in education, well-being, workforce readiness and community connection.

DENVER, CO, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As Colorado communities work to address student engagement, youth mental health, workforce readiness and social connection, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado (BBBSC) is highlighting a powerful part of the solution: consistent, caring mentorship.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado

BBBSC will bring together business, civic and community leaders for its annual [Big Little Gala](#) on Thursday, Aug. 27, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at the Denver Art Museum. Centered on the theme

“

A mentor helps a young person recognize their strengths, navigate challenges, build relationships and imagine what is possible.”

Elycia Cook

“Voices of Our Youth,” the gala will celebrate the experiences, aspirations and achievements of young people while raising critical funding for BBBSC’s mentoring programs across the Denver Metro and Pikes Peak regions.

“When we talk about strengthening Colorado’s schools, workforce, families and communities, mentorship belongs in that conversation,” said Elycia Cook, President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado. “A mentor helps a

young person recognize their strengths, navigate challenges, build relationships and imagine what is possible. Those benefits extend beyond one child; they strengthen families, schools, workplaces and entire communities.”

Colorado Youth Need Connection and Opportunity

Recent state data illustrates both the challenges facing young Coloradans and the importance of

supportive relationships.

During the 2024–25 school year, more than one in four Colorado students, approximately 244,600 young people, were chronically absent, according to the Colorado Department of Education. Chronic absenteeism can contribute to learning loss, disconnection from school, and an increased likelihood of not graduating.

Colorado's latest Healthy Kids Colorado Survey also found that 22% of high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. At the same time, the findings demonstrate the protective power of connection:

- 78% of high school students reported having an adult they could turn to for help with a serious problem.
- 72% of youth said they felt a sense of belonging at school.
- Youth with an adult to turn to were approximately 60% less likely to seriously consider suicide.

"These findings reinforce what we see every day: relationships matter," Cook said. "Mentorship is not the only answer to the challenges facing young people, but it is a proven way to strengthen the confidence, connection and support young people need to thrive."

Mentorship Produces Lasting Results

A national four-year randomized controlled study involving more than 1,300 young people across 17 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies found that youth offered the organization's community-based mentoring program experienced significantly lower rates of recurring substance use and violence-related delinquent behavior. The study also found sustained improvements in self-esteem, life satisfaction, and mental health. Arnold Ventures summarized the findings in 2025.

Long-term research examining BBBS mentoring has also linked mentorship with increased college attendance and stronger early-career economic outcomes. In one study, youth offered mentoring were 20 percentage points more likely to attend college. A larger analysis of program and administrative records also found positive differences in early-career earnings, suggesting that mentorship can contribute to economic mobility and a stronger future workforce.

Locally, BBBSC's 2025 Annual Report shows how those relationships are taking root:

- 1,641 Colorado youth served
- 46,416 hours contributed by volunteer mentors
- 52% less likely to skip school
- 78% of Littles maintained or improved their grades
- 94% of Littles reported feeling confident they could achieve their goals
- 20% more likely to enroll in college

Preparing Youth for Colorado's Future

BBBSC's [youth mentoring programs in Colorado](#) support young people from childhood through

the transition to adulthood.

Through one-to-one mentoring, school-based programs, Project AIM and Big Futures, young people develop confidence, goal-setting skills, career awareness and supportive networks. Big Futures helps teens create actionable plans for college, careers, skilled trades, military service or other pathways to independence.

Beginning in October, BBBSC's community-based matches will also gain access to weekly, staff-facilitated activities organized around six IMPACT pillars:

- Innovation and STEAM
- Movement and Wellness
- Preparation and Readiness
- Arts and Creativity
- Community and Belonging
- Think Bigger

The expanded model provides mentors, youth and families with more structured opportunities to explore careers, build life skills, strengthen relationships and connect with the broader Colorado community.

Big Little Gala — Aug. 27, 2026

The Big Little Gala is BBBSC's largest annual fundraising event. This year's gala is co-chaired by Shawn Neville, CEO of BOA Technology, and Elissa Banker, Director of Organizational Development & Community Impact at BOA Technology. BOA Technology returns as presenting sponsor.

Tickets for the 2026 gala are sold out.

Individual contributions can be made at biglittlecolorado.org/donate. [Donations](#) support the recruitment, screening, training and ongoing professional support that help create safe, enduring mentoring relationships.

The gala also leads into September, recognized by the State of Colorado as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado Month, an opportunity to celebrate mentors, elevate youth voices and invite communities to invest in the power of relationships.

Colorado residents interested in helping a young person build confidence, explore new opportunities and prepare for the future can learn how to become a mentor.

"When we invest in mentorship, we are investing in the kind of Colorado we want to build," Cook said. "A Colorado where young people feel seen, families feel supported, businesses have a strong future workforce and communities are connected across generations."

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado has served young people since 1918. Its mission is to create and support mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. BBBSC serves youth and families throughout the Denver Metro and Pikes Peak regions through 1:1 community-based and school-based mentorship, as well as programs that help young people prepare for life after high school. Learn more at biglittlcolorado.org.

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