

Partner Profiles



United Way of the Tri-Valley Area

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Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA), its funded Partners, and recipients of donor-designated funds. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit www.uwtva.org. To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.

As we reflect on National Volunteer Week that concluded on April 24, we would like to spotlight Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Franklin and Oxford Counties (BBBS), a Community Partner of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area. This organization's very existence relies on dedicated volunteers, the "Bigs," that participate in the Traditional Community Matching and the Site-Based Mentoring Programs.

The mission of BBBS is "To improve the lives of children and families by providing the care, knowledge, skills, and resources that help them achieve their goals in life." It does this in a variety of ways. The Traditional Community Matching Program works with boys and girls between the ages of eight and 12. The children are matched with an adult who has been carefully screened and trained, and the relationships that develop provide children with friendship, guidance, support and understanding which help them to grow into happy, productive citizens. The Site-Based Mentoring Program takes place usually once per week in a school setting, where Bigs and Littles typically meet to read together, play sports or computer games, or simply talk about life. The emphasis of every match is on producing positive inner and outer changes in the child, including a strengthened self-worth, improved peer relations, and improved performance at school, home, and in the community.

The following is a profile focusing on two young people mentored and given the opportunity to gain positive role models through the community and school based mentor matching programs.

John is a 10-year-old 4th grade student who has recently changed schools for the third time in three years. He lives with his mother and her boyfriend who has two teen-aged daughters. John does well in school but has a difficult time staying focused and making new friends. His father is not a factor in his life as he has a new wife and children. John is hurt and angry but he doesn't see what he can do about that. He worries about his mother and how they will survive if this boyfriend doesn't work out. His mother works long hours, often leaving John home alone with the television as company. Mom is concerned and committed to seeing a positive role model that will introduce John to age appropriate and new activities.

Megan is a 12-year-old middle school student who lives with her mother, stepfather, half sister, and half brother. Her biological father is currently in jail on drug and assault charges. The mother always suspected the father of abusing Megan but it was never proven. Megan's 10-year-old sister, Lisa, had a different father than Megan and he recently died in an accident. Both girls have been in counseling, but Mom does not have insurance and can't continue to pay for it. Now Megan is in the middle school, her grades have dropped and her mother is concerned about the new friends she is hanging around with. Mom is very busy with a new

husband, baby, and business to have much time for Megan. She wants Megan to have a female role model to share activities and normal family experiences.

While Big Brothers/Big Sisters may expand further into Greater Franklin County in the future, its strength currently resides in the Northern Androscoggin and Southern Franklin Counties. 50 “Littles” were matched with “Bigs” in the Jay area in 2009 with United Way of the Tri-Valley Area funding, and 18 matches were made in the Livermore Falls area in this time. BBBS turns to community members to volunteer to be mentors. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, or know of a child who could benefit from the program, contact: Rob Hatch at (207) 743-7035.