



Big Brothers
Big Sisters
OF SOUTH NIAGARA



Big Brothers
Big Sisters
OF NIAGARA FALLS

2021 Annual Report



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Board President Report

Over the years, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara Falls and South Niagara have worked towards their vision of ensuring that all young people realize their full potential. We have worked at becoming a leading youth mentoring organization in our communities. Our universal mission to enable life-changing mentoring relationships to ignite the power and potential of young people; has allowed our organizations to establish meaningful relationships between caring volunteer mentors that benefits the children and youth of Niagara Falls and South Niagara. Our mentors, even through the trials and tribulations of a global pandemic; while adhering to social distancing, closures, changes in their personal and professional lives, continued to advise and challenge these young people, act as their champions, provide greater consistency in their lives, connect them to broader experiences, opportunities and networks, and provide safe, nonjudgmental environments in which these young people can confide anything.

In 2021, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara Falls and South Niagara made the bold decision in a journey of amalgamation to share one board of directors, one Executive Director and to merge our teams to support our communities in a more diverse and equitable manner. We continue to strive for excellence with our combined efforts for mentoring and funding-raising. We have added new full-time positions to our organization for volunteer-engagement, and communications and marketing; in attempts to grow our brand and culture through a digital presence not only for our organizations, but also for our Nearly New Store at 4311 Queen Street, in Niagara Falls.

Through the pandemic we have been grateful and appreciative of the continued support of the United Way, the Ministry of Education, Delta Bingo, the Cities of Niagara Falls, Welland, Fort Erie, Wainfleet, Port Colborne and Pelham, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Branscombe Family Foundation to only name a few. Moving forward we remain dedicated to these partnerships that create sustainability and stability to continue our shared commitment to our community, children of Niagara, our volunteers and staff.

2021 has been a year of growth, determination and learning, allowing Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara Falls and South Niagara to continue to endure, expand and innovate. We continue to lead in the area of youth mentoring, which we would not be able to do without the support of our many committed and dedicated staff, volunteers and donors. Our generous community supports such as the Sullivan Mahoney Lawyers, Cotton Inc, Niagara Fasteners, JMR Logics, and many more. Volunteers are the backbone of our programs, our Nearly New Store, our fundraising efforts, and our board of directors. We thank you all for all that you do to make our community a better place!

- Frank Ruberto, Board President

'Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart.'
~ Elizabeth Andrew

Executive Director's Message

In May 2021, I had the honour of becoming the Executive Director for Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Niagara and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara Falls. 2021 was a year of challenge and change for many organizations, including ours. Remote work and virtual calls continued to be the norm as the COVID19 pandemic kept a firm hold throughout much of year. But we never stopped working hard to ensure that the young people we serve had the supports they needed. I am so very proud of our staff and volunteers for not only pivoting to meet our clients needs, but for truly persevering through what was a very long road to the normalcy we have started to see over the past few months.

Already in the early months of 2022, we have been able to have a taste of this normalcy with the return of in-person events for matches as well as in-person fundraising opportunities. It has been so wonderful to see all of our supporters, and most of all our Mentors and Mentees, in person face to face! It is with this renewed sense of community, and this increased energy and optimism that we look forward to finalizing our goal of official amalgamation into one unified BBBS agency in 2022.

Thank-you staff, Board Members, volunteers, families, funders, donors, and community members for your role in helping us to enable life-changing mentoring relationships for children and youth in our communities of Niagara Falls, Welland, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Pelham. You are truly helping to ignite power and potential for these young people!

- Sarah Ludberg, Executive Director



A BIG Thank You to Our Donors, Sponsors and Community Partners

Trailblazers (\$5,000 +)

Cathy and Tom Hopkins & Tim Hortons Store #30, Billyard Insurance Group, Allstate Insurance, Intact Financial Group, Tim Hortons Advertising & Promotion Fund (Canada)

Champions (\$1,500 - \$4,999)

Insurance Brokers Association of Niagara Falls Inc., OxyVinyls Canada, Youngs Insurance Brokers, Cotton Inc., Fidelity Investments Canada ULC, Bosch Rexroth Canada

Leaders (\$500 - \$1,499)

Brock Ford Sales, Giant Tiger Stores Limited, Crackerjack Stadium, F.E. Coyne Insurance Brokers, An Elaborate Affair, Kings Wednesday Night Hockey League Welland, Canoe Financial, Debbie Wilson, Tom Thornton, Karen Trebilcock, Judith Chimenti

In-Kind Sponsorship

Club Richelieu, Ray and Judy Fortier, Norm Fortier, Cathy and Tom Hopkins (Tim Hortons Owners Niagara Falls), Frontier Restaurant, Big Reds Meat Market, Vermeers Garden Centre, Tim Hortons (852 Niagara Street, Welland), Scientists in School Virtual Event, Brandon McIntee, Tom Thornton, Jack Brown, Azzarello Family, McDonald's (Thorold Stone Road), Giant FM and Country 89, Natalie Mazzarelli, Sullivan Mahoney Lawyers, Robyn Stone, Sue Mariage, Olivieri Family, Home Builders Association, Jonathan Hart, First Book Canada, Rose City Pizza, Little Ceasars Pizza, Sunshine Rotary of Niagara Falls

We extend our sincerest appreciation to all of our donors. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, we apologize in advance for any errors or omissions.

Fundraisers & Events



Community Events

- Grisafi Golf Tournament
- Sip While You Shop

Summer Picnic



Halloween Party at Club Richelieu



Holiday Party at Frontier BBQ & Smokehouse



Funders



Ontario
Trillium
Foundation



Fondation
Trillium
de l'Ontario



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



**Emergency
Community
Support Fund**

Funded by
Canada



We would like to thank and recognize the tremendous financial support of our many funders. Without their support, we would not be able to fulfill our mission of enabling life-changing mentoring relationships that ignite the power and potential of young people. United Way Niagara, Branscombe Family Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ministry of Education, Niagara Community Foundation, City of Niagara Falls - Sleep Cheap Charities Reap, Government of Canada Emergency Community Support Fund, Delta Monte Carlo Bingo and Gaming Centre in Niagara Falls, Delta Bingo and Gaming in Welland, and Golden Nugget Bingo in Fort Erie - we thank-you!

Thank you Tim Hortons stores in Niagara Falls for
choosing us as the recipients of your
2021 Smile Cookie Fundraising Campaign!

This campaign raised \$27,856.50 for our impactful mentoring programs!



Thank you to former Mentor Kristin Bortolon!



Kristin held an independent fundraiser on GoFundMe to raise money for BBBS while she hiked the Bruce Trail! In total her campaign raised \$2800 for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Board of Directors and Staff

2021-2022 Board of Directors

Frank Ruberto, President

Victoria Brzozowski, Vice President

Mike Leone, Treasurer

Sheryl Johnson, Secretary

Virginia Workman, Director

Bruce Smith, Director

Tom Kubisewsky, Director

Trevor Marsh, Director

Keri Harrison, Director

Ellen Schonewille, Director



Staff

Sarah Ludberg, Executive Director

Melissa Lodba, Interim Casework Supervisor

Melissa Pelletier, Fundraising & Events Coordinator

Christina Lajeunesse, Community Engagement Coordinator

Drew Comerford, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Anna Mae Vaccaro, Intake Coordinator

Chelsea Robinson, Caseworker

Celine Beyer, Caseworker

Kaila Lachan, Caseworker

Amy Alderson, Caseworker

Ashley Dunbabin, Casework Supervisor (On Leave)

Our Mentoring Programs

Children and Youth Served

For the year 2021, our agencies provided an amazing 399 mentoring opportunities for children and youth in our communities of Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Wainfleet and Pelham!!

214 mentoring volunteers provided the following:

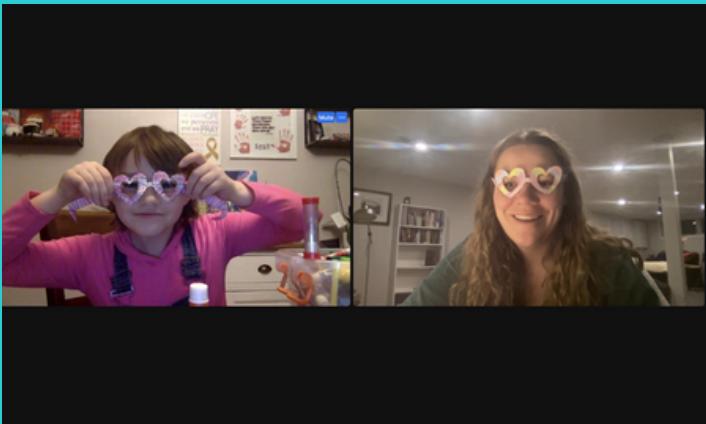
- 188 Community-Based 1 to 1 matches through our mentoring programs Big Brother, Big Sister, Big Couple, and the Student Parent Mentoring Program.
- 117 young people were supported through 14 group mentoring programs. These mentoring programs are "Go Girls!", Game On! and the After School Program.
- 40 Site-based 1 to 1 matches through In-School Mentoring
- 80 Big Bunch and Big For A Day opportunities



Mentor Bridget and mentee Kaylie building their squirrel picnic table that was donated to BBBS by the Hart Family!

For Mother's Day mentor Matthew and mentee Ethan baked a lemon cake for Ethan's mom! Pictured is Ethan with the cake.





"I met with Charlee tonight for virtual mentoring. Charlee has Pajama day tomorrow so we made "crazy glasses" that matched her pajamas."

- Maddy, Mentor

Couple Match Mentors
Des and Stuart enjoying a
Niagara Falls Jr. Canucks
game with their
Mentee Damon!



Mentor and Mentee Kate and Gabby recommend matches get some ice cream together during these beautiful Niagara summers!

School-Based Mentoring

Thank you to our School Partnerships in Niagara Falls and South Niagara!

Niagara Falls

- St. John Henry Newman
- St. Vincent De Paul
- St. Patrick
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel
- St. Gabriel Lalemant
- Niagara Catholic Virtual Elementary
- St. Mary
- Mary Ward
- Princess Margaret
- Forestview
- Simcoe Street
- Heximer

"Everything is going great and I am very happy with the positive relationship that is developing between (mentee's name) and myself"
- ISM Mentor

One of our In-School Matches created a video game together!

[\[Click here\]](#) to check out a video of the game!



South Niagara

- Diamond Trail
- Glendale
- Plymouth
- Princess Elizabeth
- St. Andrew
- St. Mary
- Glynn A. Green
- McKay
- St. George
- St. Philomena
- Stevensville



NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



"I have been running an After School Program for the past 7 weeks, and have been able to mentor 14 kids through the program. On our last session we celebrated with a treat of Ice-Cream Sandwiches. The kids were all so sad that the program was ending and wished that they could continue with the program until the end of the school year."
- After School Program Mentor



"Go Girls! was an amazing experience to be a part of. I was able to witness the girls open up and become closer with their classmates."

I wish I had this program when I went to school!"

- Go Girls! Mentor

"I really enjoyed how involved the girls got in discussions and how excited they were for some of the physical activities!"

- Go Girls! Mentor

"I learned to be more kind, to work in a team, and how to communicate effectively."

- Go Girls! mentee, grade 7

"I've had such a positive experience as a Go Girls! Mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters over the past years. I enjoy being a positive role model to a group of female youth while participating in fun and interactive activities and discussions. In the short amount of time I've had which each group, I've had the pleasure to watch so many come out of their shells. Each group has made a positive impact on my life and I hope I do the same for them!"

- Go Girls! Mentor



The mentees in a recent Game On! group described their mentors as nice, fun, and easy-going. They talked about all of the different games they played including basketball, dodgeball, football, soccer, etc.

Mentors shared that they enjoyed the boys' willingness to participate and how excited they were to be at group each week. They also shared that as the weeks went on they noticed the boys were more willing to participate in group discussions and play new and different games.

Mentors also shared that they worked on encouragement and good sportsmanship throughout Game On! and saw the boys improve in this area as well!

Testimonials



"From the time I started with Big Brothers Big Sisters the experience has been amazing. They are always there when I need them to answer questions or to help me out with certain aspects of the match. My

Little Brother Jacob has changed my life for the better. From taking him golfing, going to the park or just hanging out at his house playing video games, he has really made a massive impact on me and the way I view the world. I'm grateful for this experience and I hope for many more in the future!"

- Brady, Big Brother Volunteer



"My daughter has always struggled with trust and bonding through friendship. Her Big has opened her eyes to so many experiences we wouldn't have been able to have her attend, as well as helped her build trust and open her heart to friendship.

Their weekly meetings are the highlight of both their weeks, and I am incredibly thankful every day for their budding friendship."

- Sabrina, mother of client matched in Big Sister Program



"Big Brothers Big Sisters has been an absolutely incredible agency to be involved with! To be so intentional and focused on children and youth by showing them support is everything!! I was matched with my little sister Rebecca over a year ago and being a mentor has absolutely changed my life!

She is so kind hearted and caring and I have noticed her confidence and self-esteem grow. One of my biggest take aways so far it's just to be in the present moment and to be another part of her support system. That there's someone else in her corner cheering her on. Whether we are going for a walk, at the park, or sitting together and doing crafts there is always so much laughter and chatting between us! My hope going into the mentorship was to make even a small difference in her life and what has happened is she's made a huge impact on mine!! "

- Gina, Big Sister Volunteer

Testimonials



"Charlee has had a great experience with her mentor. Before Charlee had the opportunity to have a Big Sister she was a quiet kid. Since starting the program, we have noticed a big change in her socially, she is making new friends, is more eager to participate in activities and overall socializing more with her peers and family. As a parent, it is nice to have a safe environment for Charlee to grow and I feel the excitement she has now for her mentor exceeds my expectations! "

- Jess, mother of client matched in Big Sister program

"The Big Brother Big Sister program has had a major impact on my son's life. It has given him a strong, positive, and good male role model in his life that has been such a big support for him that he has been able to depend on. I cannot even begin to express how grateful I am for this program and just how amazing of a match they provided for my son that went above any of my expectations. I couldn't have picked a more perfect match, who is patient, kind, fun and so supportive of all of my son's needs and shows up consistently letting my son know he is cared for and important. Being a part of this program not only has helped build confidence in my son but also given him someone he feels safe to talk to about anything and knows is in his corner. It has helped build up his self esteem and he is always looking forward to his visits and excited to share with his Big Brother his accomplishments. Having a dependable male in my son's life has helped show him that he does matter. He feels validated and important, heard and like his ideas matter, which as his mom is something more than I could have ever dreamed of and is something that will forever impact his life."

- Danielle, mother of client matched in Big Brother program



Get Involved!

Volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters

Spark Potential

MENTORING IGNITES THE POWER AND POTENTIAL IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Potential lives within every young person. Yet millions of children and youth are still in urgent need of someone who will stand in their corner and ignite their full power and potential.

If you are interested in becoming a Mentor, or learning more, please fill out the Volunteer Inquiry Form below!

[Click Here](#)



BINGO



We are in desperate need of volunteers for Bingo in Niagara Falls, Welland and Fort Erie. Without volunteers, we could lose this very important source of funding for our organization.

With flexible 2-4 hour shifts and as little as one shift per month, volunteering for Bingo is an easy and impactful way to give back to Big Brothers Big Sisters!

Nearly New Store

Did you know that Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara Falls has a thrift store called the Nearly New Store? The Nearly New Store is almost entirely run by volunteers and all proceeds go directly to supporting our impactful mentoring programs. We are currently in need of volunteers to help out in the store. You can volunteer for as little as one 4-hour shift per week - with choice of Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 3pm.



If volunteering for Bingo or at the Nearly New Store interests you, please contact our Community Engagement Coordinator, Christina Lajeunesse at Christina.Lajeunesse@bigbrothersbigsisters.ca or by phone at (905) 735-0570 or (905) 357-5454, Ext. 224.

In Memoriam

Darlene Hazlett

Darlene was a long tenured and dedicated BBBS volunteer and a former Board Member. She was the primary Fort Erie Bingo volunteer for many years, and worked to organize her fellow volunteers. She will be greatly missed by all at BBBS.



John "Jumbo" Halligan

John was a former Mentee and Mentor. He was Chairperson for the BBBS of Niagara Falls Golf Committee, supporting and organizing Golf For Kids' Sake from 1996 to 2019. He also facilitated for many years his long-term employer (Geon Niagara Plant, OxyVinyls Canada Inc.) becoming the Title Sponsors of the Golf For Kids Sake tournament. A huge advocate for Big Brothers Big Sisters, John took his support one step further and decided to leave a legacy gift to BBBS of Niagara Falls in his Will. And when he passed away in 2020, the agency was the recipient of a \$10,000 gift. And in this meaningful gift, John's legacy, and his passion for and work to support BBBS, continues.



Click the image to learn more about Will Power!

**Big Brothers
Big Sisters**

**WILL
POWER™**

Support a charity in your Will

Your Will is Powerful

Change the world with a charitable gift in your Will, while still supporting those you love.

GET STARTED