



Big Sisters
of BC Lower Mainland

34 East 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5T 2G5
P: 604.873.4525 F: 604.873.2122 www.bigsisters.bc.ca

June 10, 2015

Burnaby City Hall
Executive Committee of Council
c/o Administrative Officer I, Executive Committee Council (grants), Clerk's Department
4949 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC V5G 1M2

Dear Burnaby City Council,

"It takes a village to raise a child." – African proverb.

It is such a tragedy when a young person, feeling isolated, alone, and unsupported, makes a decision that results in a lifetime of struggle, or worse, ends their life. Early intervention, with long-term support, care and guidance can mean that this decision is never made, and a better, productive and happier path is followed.

That's the difference volunteer Big Sisters make in the lives of over 760 vulnerable girls every year.

Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland goes above and beyond establishing well-matched mentoring relationships – we support our matches throughout their formal match period, assigning a professional Caseworker to each match and ensuring that the quality of time spent together is reinforced through providing memorable experiences and resources for the Big and Little Sisters.

At our core, we are a volunteer-based organization that encourages community citizenship through three well-established and highly-effective mentoring programs: Big Sisters, Study Buddy and Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds (after-school group mentoring). Please find enclosed more details regarding our Big Sisters mentoring program.

Thank you for taking the time to review and consider this package requesting your renewed support. We would be honored, if you would consider investing \$10,000 to fund five Big Sisters matches in Burnaby, for one year.

Contributing to Big Sisters mentoring programs provides a valuable return on your investment. Groundbreaking research conducted in 2013 by The Boston Consulting Group has shown that every dollar invested in mentoring programs generates, on average, \$18 in hard dollar returns to society over time.

Many of the girls referred to our program struggle with low self-esteem, family conflict, loss or trauma, bullying, past or present abuse, poverty, developmental challenges, or physical disabilities. Our programs are aimed at prevention and intervention, as research has shown that a warm, supportive relationship with a caring adult is a major factor in helping children overcome challenges in their lives.

The transformation of a child into a confident, concerned and motivated young person is remarkable. Time and again, we hear what a significantly positive impact having a Big Sister in their lives makes for Little Sisters.

"Big Sisters came to me at the exact right moment in my life. When I met my Big Sister, the horizon in my life extended." – Graduated Little Sister.

"These programs are unique in that they allow children to connect with another adult who becomes a role model, a friend, a confidante and – for me – an "adopted" sister for life" – Graduated Little Sister.

Your financial support will ensure that we are able to continue to match vulnerable girls with a supportive female mentor, who will help these girls reach their fullest potential.

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Thank you for taking the time to consider our proposal. Should you have any questions, please contact Fleur Cooper at the coordinates noted below.

Sincerely,

Justine Greene
Executive Director

Encl.

Contact:
Fleur Cooper
Manager of Corporate and Foundation Giving
Email: fcooper@bigsisters.bc.ca
Direct: 604 873 4525 ext 317

Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland Charitable Number: 118809409RR0001

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Programs Overview

As a leading child and youth mentoring charity, Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland facilitates life-changing relationships that inspire and empower girls to reach their potential, both as individuals and citizens.

We believe that by changing the course of young lives, through supportive mentoring relationships, we can, in turn, change the course of a community's future. These positive relationships assist the girls in our programs to gain the skills, tools and confidence to help them grow into capable and contributing members of society and help them reach their full potential as adults - when this is accomplished, society as a whole benefits.

Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland is committed to enhancing the confidence, self-esteem and well-being of children through supportive friendships with caring women.

Since 1960, Big Sisters has been providing girls with positive female mentors throughout the Lower Mainland of BC. We are a volunteer-based organization with a staff (full or part time) of 25 and an operating budget of approximately \$1.7 million. Over 970 men and women volunteer each year with Big Sisters. Our female mentors are the vast majority of our volunteers. Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland volunteers contribute over 73,000 volunteer hours in our programs and administrative support each year.

In 2014, we served 767 girls in our mentoring programs and made 432 new mentoring matches.

Our ongoing goal is to provide a positive mentor and role model for every girl who needs one.



Matches girls (ages 7-17) with a volunteer Big Sister in a one-to-one mentoring relationship, who meet once a week for 2 to 4 hours for a minimum of one year. Through these mentoring relationships, Little Sisters are provided with friendship and support to help build their self-esteem and encourage them to make positive life decisions. We anticipate serving over 370 Big & Little Sister matches in 2015. Our cost per match: \$2,000 per annum.



Matches girls (ages 7-17) with adult, female volunteers who offer them educational guidance, outside of school. Study Buddies meet for one hour a week to do homework and build the Little Sister's learning skills to help her reach her academic goals. We anticipate serving approximately 209 Study Buddy matches in 2015. Our cost per match: \$2,000 per annum.



A group mentoring program that encourages physical activity, healthy eating and the development of a positive self-image among girls aged 11-14. This eight week, after school program is led by female volunteer mentors (ages 19-25). We anticipate serving 420 girls in grades 6-8 in this program in 2015. Approximately 75 volunteers will deliver this program in our partner schools. Go Girls! is running in select schools in Vancouver, Coquitlam and Burnaby. It costs approximately \$11, 250 to provide three sessions at one school for a year.

What if...

- ✓ Every girl fulfilled her potential?
- ✓ Every girl was set on the right path?
- ✓ Every girl finished high school, went to college, got a job, and gave back to her community?

...wouldn't that be something?

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Big Sisters Mentoring Program

This impactful one to one mentorship relationship produces positive results, is preventative and contributes back to our community.

Each match meets once a week for 2 to 4 hours for a minimum of one year. Matches enjoy a wide range of activities, including making crafts, playing sports, watching movies, and just hanging out and talking. This mentorship relationship is the foundation to which we have built our learning and understanding to better serve our community.

This weekly meet up isn't just a social engagement to look forward to, it's so much more than that. Having a Big Sister of their very own provides each Little Sister with the support, guidance and trust to be able to confide in her Big Sister about anything that may be troubling her or she is having difficulty with.

Big Sisters are able to support their Little Sisters in a time of crisis:

- ✓ As soon as they run away
- ✓ Are kicked out
- ✓ Being bullied
- ✓ Have health issues or safety concerns
- ✓ School challenges
- ✓ Experiencing physical or mental abuse

They also have conversations about school, work, responsible alcohol and drug use, healthy relationships etc. This is especially important when the Little Sister isn't speaking with family or counsellors about these issues.

Serving as role models, our mentors teach by example the importance of giving and giving back, of staying in school, and having respect for family, peers and community. We request a minimum one year commitment from our matches; our average match length is almost 3 years which demonstrates the importance of this relationship for not only the Little Sister, but the Big Sister as well.

We are often one of the first service providers to find out a young person has left home or is having issues at school or home and are able to provide resources to the mentor and mentee including: counselling, youth advocates, food banks, etc. Through this early intervention we are able to provide the support the vulnerable girl needs to grow and prosper.

"Experiencing firsthand the impact a social service such as Big Sisters has had on my own life has instilled in me a passion to contribute and assist others in my future career. It is my greatest aspiration to become a change-maker, and make a positive difference in the lives of others in need. – Little Sister, Age 15 years old."

Key Program Objectives:

- Increasing self-esteem
- Increasing confidence
- Encouraging positive and healthy behavior
- Encouraging girls to reach their full potential
- Facilitate girls to effectively communicate their feelings
- Improving well-being
- To provide a supportive mentor for every girls who needs one in the Lower Mainland

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Big Sister Mentoring Program Timeline

January 2015 ~ December 2015 *(Please note, the below actions are on a continuing basis as we accept both Big and Little Sister applications year round)*

- Ongoing marketing of the Big Sister program for the purpose of recruiting Big Sister volunteers, with particular attention to culturally diverse groups
- Approximately 2 – 3 months, for a volunteer Big Sister application to be reviewed, the volunteer to be trained and interviewed by a caseworker.
- Approximately 6 months, after the volunteer has been accepted as a Big Sister, for the volunteer to be matched with a Little Sister. *(Please note, this time period can take longer or shorter depending on the geographic area and the amount of volunteers available in that area)*
- Approximately 3 months, for the Little Sister application to be reviewed, the Little Sisters and their families have Child Safety Training and be interviewed to determine specific needs in order to match with an appropriate mentor.
- Approximately 6 months - 1 year, after the child has been accepted as a Little Sister that they will be matched with a Big Sister. *(Please note, this time period can take longer or shorter depending on the geographic area and the amount of volunteers available in that area)*
- Ongoing throughout the length of a mentorship match, counseling and support to each Big Sister match (volunteer, Little Sister, parent/guardian) to ensure successful, healthy relationships. As well as, to ensure child safety and that matches reach at minimum their initial one year commitment
- 2 - 4 hours/week the volunteer Big Sister spends with the Little Sister doing activities that boost the Little Sisters confidence and self-esteem.

"I have been involved with this program since I was eight years old and I am incredibly thankful to have my Big Sister in my life supporting me as a mentor. She has helped me build confidence and leadership skills over the years by encouraging me to apply myself, strive for my personal best, and then pushing me to new higher personal bests. Without Big Sisters, I would not be the change-driven individual that I am today." -Little Sister, 16 years old

The Big Sisters organization provides professional and personalized support, mentor and child safety training, ongoing professional development and activities for the Big Sister matches. Each Big and Little Sister is assigned a Caseworker who supports them throughout their match.

We do more than just connect a girl with an adult friend; we offer multiple years of support from elementary school to university.

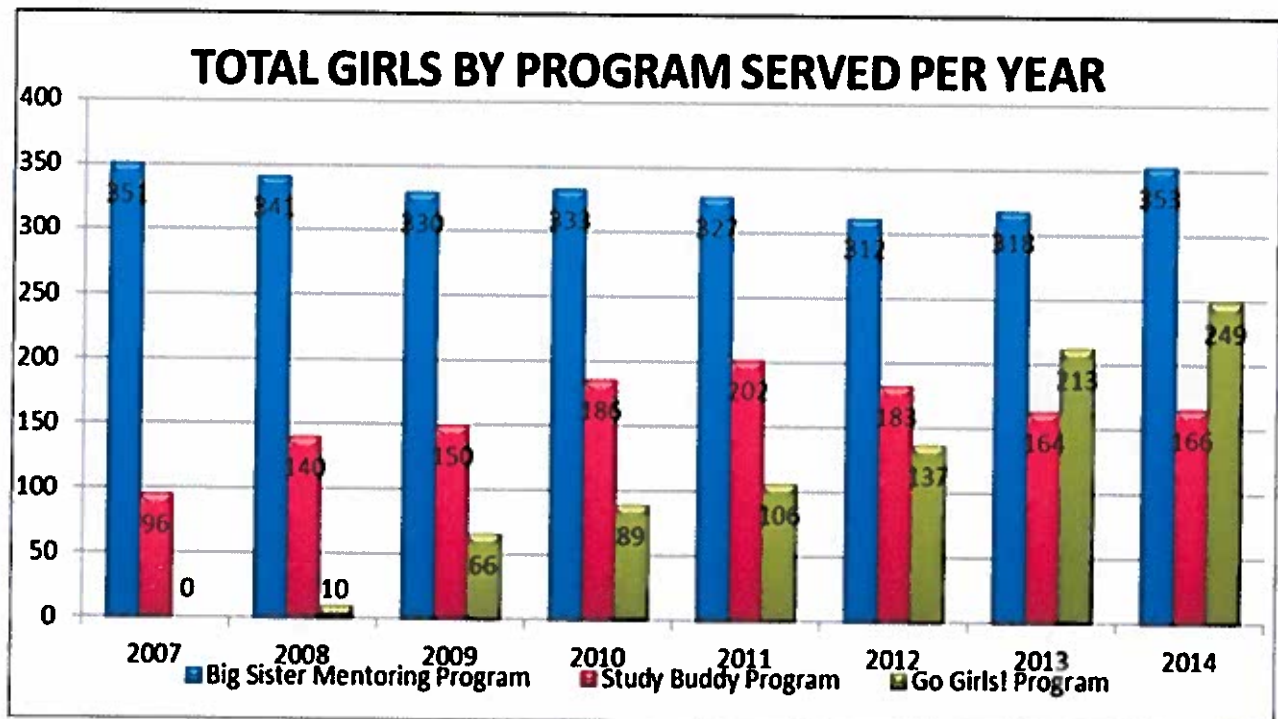
- We support families and help families find the resources they need to provide for their children and integrate into their communities.
- We provide volunteers with the support and skills they need to develop a supportive relationship with their Little Sister that will flourish.
- Conflict mediation between child and parent; parent and mentor; and mentor and child.
- Communication between other supports for the child/youth including: schools, social workers, youth workers.
- On-going counselling for parents and guardians.
- Scholarship and Career support for Little Sisters



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- Researching, communicating and connecting with extra resources for our families: food banks, legal advice, Christmas hamper programs etc.
- Researching and recommending other community programs for our Littles and their siblings in which to participate: anxiety peer groups, self-esteem programs, summer camps, etc.



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Our Little Sisters

Girls, aged 7-17, are referred to our agency by parents, school personnel, social workers and other helping professionals. We serve an extremely vulnerable, socially disadvantaged population. Our Little Sisters face serious adversity. The majority of the girls referred to our programs suffer from low self-esteem and come from families receiving income assistance or working for low wages. These girls often struggle with family conflict, bullying, anxiety, loss or trauma, past or present abuse, poverty, developmental challenges, or physical disabilities.

We hear the same wish repeated from the Little Sisters – they want someone special to spend time with and they want to have someone “in their corner”.

Little Sisters by the numbers.

- 53% of the girls in our programs come from a single parent family
- 3% from foster homes.
- 49% of our Little Sisters are directly referred to Big Sisters by their schools, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or other family service agencies.

Our Little Sisters represent a wide array of ethnicities and social demographics.

- 32% of our Little Sisters were born outside Canada and find themselves struggling to integrate as new immigrants.
- 43% of our Little Sisters family's first language is a language other than English.
- 15% are of First Nations heritage.
- 54% of our Little Sisters come from low income families.

Mentoring is crucial for girls 7-17 yrs. These are critical and formative years in terms of emotional, social and physical development. Big Sisters focuses on prevention versus intervention - these years are essential in determining later outcomes.

We know that “children need adults who care about them, believe in them, and listen to them [and that] the presence of supportive relationships with adults at home, in school, and in the neighbourhood is strongly correlated with children's self-report of their overall health. In fact, supportive relationships with adults have a stronger association with children's perception of their overall health (that is, their nutrition and sleep habits).”
(MDI Report <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi/>)

Research shows that girls' self-esteem plummets at an earlier age compared to boys, with higher reports of depression, self-harm, and disordered eating. The media and society at large constantly reinforces gender stereotypes and places a huge amount of pressure on girls to look and act a certain way, many girls are not pursuing their interests but instead trying to fit into a box.

Girls often present as quieter in the classroom and can be overlooked. We also know that rates of physical activity drop off for girls around 13/14 while peer relationships become more and more influential. Just another reason why our Go Girls! Program is so vital in helping to develop assertive and confident behavior in these girls.

Adolescent females are more likely than males to report struggling with their mental health, and are three times as likely to report having Depression (13% vs. 5%) or an Anxiety Disorder (13% vs. 4%) (McCreary Adolescent Health Report, pg. 17). Mentorship is one of the most impactful ways to combat negative mental health in young people.