

Embarking on Second Century of Service, Big Brothers Big Sisters to Match One Million Children Through Expanded Programs for At-Risk Students and Children of Prisoners



Website

'The Apprentice' Winner Kelly Perdew Issues Call to All Americans to Support Big Brothers Big Sisters

U.S. Sen. Ensign, Congressman Schiff Challenge All Congressional Staffers to Become a Big Brother or Big Sister

WASHINGTON, June 8 /PRNewswire/ -- As Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) embarks on its second century of service, BBBSA President and CEO Judy Vredenburgh today renewed the organization's commitment to serve more than one million at-risk children annually. At a Capitol Hill press conference, Vredenburgh said BBBS will continue to expand its youth mentoring platform to reach the most at-risk children nationwide, including students in Title I schools and children of prisoners.

U.S. Sen. John Ensign (R-Nev.), and Congressman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), both Big Brothers, and Kelly Perdew, winner of NBC's second season of "The Apprentice" and a former Big Brother, joined Vredenburgh in calling on all Americans to support Big Brothers Big Sisters as it works toward reaching its goal of one million matches annually. Ensign and Schiff also challenged all Congressional staffers to become a Big Brother or Big Sister.

The bipartisan and celebrity support comes on the heels of BBBS' centennial anniversary and as the organization reasserts its commitment to helping fulfill America's Promise. In the last four years alone, BBBS has doubled the number of matches to 225,000 in 2004.

"More than 10 million children between the ages of 6 and 18 are considered at-risk, but it's the youth from economically underprivileged backgrounds or with incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents who are most in need of our support," Vredenburgh said, with the Capitol as the backdrop. "Research has shown that these two groups of children can benefit greatly from a Big.

"At-risk students who are matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister show improved academic performance, higher levels of self-confidence and better attitudes toward school," said Vredenburgh. "And without positive adult intervention, studies show that 70 percent of children of incarcerated parents are at some point likely to be incarcerated themselves. We want to break that cycle of incarceration."

BBBS has already seen significant results with earlier efforts to mentor students in tough schools and children with a parent in prison.

Since BBBS began school-based mentoring programs in the 1990s, the number of school-based matches has risen exponentially -- quadrupling to 104,000 in 2004 from 27,000 in 1999 -- resulting in significant benefits to students. School-based mentors spend at least one hour a week during the school day with