



**Contact Information:**  
Melanie Chasteen  
Vice President, Marketing and Communications  
512.807.3609 (Office)  
512.791.5110 (Mobile)  
mchasteen@bigmentoring.org  
www.bigmentoring.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 15, 2009

**Big Brothers Big Sisters Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month  
with a Call to Action to Serve More Hispanic Children**

PHILADELPHIA, PA (September 15, 2009) - In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15), Big Brothers Big Sisters is issuing a challenge, asking the Latino community, supporters and donors to pull together to ensure that every Hispanic child who needs a caring mentor gets one.

The nation's largest donor-based volunteer network of mentors for youth today announced its intention to increase the number of Latino children served and engage more Hispanic volunteers. Big Brothers Big Sisters, with nearly 400 local agencies, serves almost 260,000 children of low-income, single and incarcerated parents with a focus on breaking negative cycles. Hispanic children represent more than 17 percent of children served by the nationwide network -- a percentage that is steadily increasing. Research has shown that Big Brothers Big Sisters has helped vulnerable children succeed in school, behave non-violently and avoid substance abuse.

In particular, the organization urgently needs a few good *hombres* to serve as Big Brothers. More than 70 percent of children waiting for a "Big" are boys, yet only three out of every 10 inquiries about volunteering come from men.

"The Hispanic community has a strong tradition of mentoring youth," said Hector Cortez, the organization's newly appointed director of Hispanic Mentoring. "As such, Big Brothers Big Sisters wants to join with the community in better serving more Latino youth."

Through a generous grant from the MetLife Foundation, the organization created a variety of tools to help its network of agencies enhance outreach to the Hispanic community. Just a few of the tools include bilingual videos for parents and potential volunteers on the benefits of the program and informational materials including a *fotonovela*, a comic book-like brochure familiar to many Hispanics given its common use throughout Latin America. The tools, available to all agencies in the Big Brothers Big Sisters network, go beyond simple translation and take a culturally competent approach to the information about the value of mentorship.

“Many of our Hispanic “Littles” come from immigrant families,” Cortez said. “They are adjusting to the nuances of American culture and often face great challenges that make them highly at-risk. You don’t need to speak Spanish, although it can be helpful. We simply ask that Latinos consider sharing their time and pride in their Hispanic culture with a child looking for a mentor.”

National Big Brother of the Year for 2009 Ben De Leon and Little Brother Anthony, who reside in Austin, Texas, are testaments of the power of mentorship. De Leon was motivated to make the commitment after reading these powerful words, written in a letter by 10-year-old Anthony’s grandmother, asking for De Leon to become Anthony’s official Big Brother after the pair connected through a school-based mentorship program.

*You could be a role model in Anthony’s life. Anthony needs someone in his life right now to lead him in the right direction.*

Anthony says with his Big Brother, he’s able to share sports activities, have someone to help him with homework and have a trusted adult to talk to about anything. Working with his match support specialist, De Leon makes sure Anthony’s family has resources to give his Little Brother every opportunity to succeed.

A lawyer who shares an affinity for sports, love of the University of Texas Longhorns and a common Hispanic heritage with Little Brother Anthony, De Leon believes the experience has affected him profoundly.

“I want to continue to advance the organization’s mission of recruiting more mentors, particularly Hispanic males, to make a difference for so many deserving youth who can benefit in so many ways from the Big Brothers Big Sisters network.”

New data from a study conducted for Big Brothers Big Sisters by Harris Interactive finds positive impacts of being a “Little” continue into adulthood. The study found adult “Littles” are more likely to have a four-year college degree, household incomes of \$75,000 or greater and that they are more likely to have strong family relationships.

Generous support for Big Brothers Big Sisters Hispanic Mentoring is being provided this year by MetLife Foundation, Cargill Inc., Wachovia Foundation, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, and M&T Trust.

To learn how you can volunteer or support Big Brothers Big Sisters efforts in the Hispanic community, please visit [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org) for information in English and Spanish.

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