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Local Pair in Big Brothers Big Sisters Program Invited to Meet President Obama
President and First Lady Issue Call to Action for National Mentoring Month

AUSTIN, TX (January 19, 2010) - Austin attorney Ben De Leon and his Little Brother Anthony will take part in a White House ceremony on Wednesday, Jan. 20, 3 p.m. CST/East Room to mark National Mentoring Month. The celebration comes as the nation's largest donor-supported network of volunteer mentors of youth issues a call for Americans to support its effort to match thousands of children, especially boys of color, who are waiting to be matched with mentors.

Ben met Anthony four years ago through a short-term mentoring program at his church and soon discovered that the then 7-year-old had been waiting to be matched with a Big Brother. Impressed with how well they interacted, Anthony's grandmother put Ben in contact with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas. She wanted to make the friendship official and ensure the mentoring relationship had the support that would make it last. Four years later, De Leon is not only still matched with Anthony; he was also named Big Brothers Big Sisters of America's 2009 National Big Brother of the Year.

Anthony lives with his grandmother and grandfather, the latter suffering from arthritis, which makes it difficult for him to enjoy many physical activities with the youngster. 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, Ben makes sure Anthony's family has resources to give his Little Brother every opportunity to succeed.

President Obama has proclaimed January National Mentoring Month, urging Americans to give back to young people, saying mentors help children grow into productive and responsible adults. Big Brothers Big Sisters, a network of 385 agencies serving 255,000 children of single, low-income and incarcerated parents and their 255,000 mentors, expects an increase this month in volunteers and parents enrolling their children. To meet the demand for its services, the mentoring network is urging Americans to invest in the cause, not just with time, but also with financial support.

“Historically, National Mentoring Month is a great opportunity for us to recruit volunteers. However, our growth and ability to serve more kids who need us requires additional financial support to fund our careful mentor matching and the personal ongoing support we provide children, their parents and our volunteer mentors,” said Big Brothers Big Sisters of America President and CEO Karen Mathis. “Our screening, monitoring and individual match support enables our agencies to sustain long-term mentoring friendships that yield successful outcomes, which differentiates Big Brothers Big Sisters as an organization that is proven to help vulnerable kids break negative cycles.”

National Mentoring Month is spearheaded by the Harvard Mentoring Project of the Harvard School of Public Health, MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is a lead partner.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation’s largest donor-supported volunteer network of long-term mentors for youth, providing careful matching, screening and ongoing support for “Bigs,” “Littles,” and families. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas actively serves more than 1,000 of Central Texas’ most vulnerable children, mostly those of single, low-income or incarcerated parents.

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