

June 15, 2020**Big Brothers Big Sisters Helping Parents with Childcare Needs**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia announced the launch of OPERATION SUMMER HELP today in an effort to help Central Georgia families find safe childcare options. Based on their nationally recognized volunteer accreditation process, potential caregivers may apply to be placed on a BBBS Caregiver List, which will be available to parents free of charge. Potential caregivers will undergo a similar application process as regular BBBS volunteers, which includes an in-depth application, background check and basic training. Families will have access to the caregivers who successfully complete the process.

"So many parents are scrambling to find safe childcare options as camps and other programs are cancelled due to Covid-19," stated Betsy Fitzgerald, BBBS of the Heart of Georgia's President & CEO. "Our program is based on the most stringent screening process, standardized across the country. We hope by offering this service to our community, it may help alleviate some of the stress parents and guardians are already facing." BBBS Board Chair Gary Rosser, Jr. added, "The safety of our community's youth is our priority. We want to provide some relief for parents who need to work and to find safe options for their kids."

Interested caregivers, ages 16 and above, may request an application by email to mary.houston@BBBSHeartGA.org OR text SUMMERHELP to 478-228-8449. An application fee of \$40 is required to cover agency costs to process applications, background checks, and training. Families needing childcare and access to the OPERATION SUMMER HELP caregiver list should email kids@BBBSHeartGA.org to receive an application. There is no cost to families. Questions may be directed to either email or by calling 478-745-3984. BBBS of the Heart of Georgia offices are currently closed to the public.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia

Serving Central Georgia for over 66 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia is focused on bringing one-to-one mentoring to the children and families who need it most. As an organization whose mission is dedicated to creating positive, healthy human relationships, BBBS continues to do everything they can to move this critical work forward and be there for the most vulnerable across our communities.

With everything our children face, the coronavirus pandemic presents a whole new set of challenges. Mentoring is more important than ever, as it can be that extra support system that youth rely on in this time of crisis. Social distancing has not slowed down Big Brothers Big Sisters' commitment to keeping their mentoring matches connected - socially and emotionally. The agency has found innovative ways to make sure Bigs (mentors) and Littles (mentees) are still meeting virtually. They are providing resources Bigs and Littles can utilize together, from fun interactive games and educational tools to guidance on managing stress, maintaining focus on schoolwork, and combating boredom and negative influences. On top of social isolation, many of the youth BBBS serve face societal barriers and opportunity gaps including poverty and discrimination. By having their mentor be there for them—even though not in person—can make a huge impact as our youth won't have to face these barriers alone. These positive relationships provide hope, positivity and resiliency - the things that will help them get through this pandemic.

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been – and will continue to be – an extension of families all across Central Georgia. The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. A longtime United Way partner, our mentoring program helps build bridges and break down barriers by pairing one adult volunteer (Big) with one child (Little) and supporting each Big/Little match at every stage. The organization now brings a focus on a child's potential, and the role adults have to help children achieve their best possible futures by defending that potential. For more information, sign up your child, or apply to be a mentor, visit www.BBBSHeartGA.org.

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