

# City of Lawrence Outside Agency Annual Report For Calendar Year 2017

Reports on activity should be submitted electronically to Danielle Buschkoetter, at [dbuschkoetter@lawrenceks.org](mailto:dbuschkoetter@lawrenceks.org) by Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 at 5:00pm. For the following questions please refer back to your [2017 application for funding](#).

**Reporting Period:** Calendar Year 2017

**Agency Name:** Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters serving Douglas County

1. Refer to the program in which your agency received funding; provide a participant success story that helps demonstrate the accomplishments of the program.

Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters serving Douglas County matches children facing adversity with caring, adult mentors. Our program is based on the belief that all children - regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or family background - can achieve success in life, especially with the guidance and support of a caring adult mentor.



The success story I'd like to share is a parallel story of my own Little, Sam, and I, along with the story of John and Sheldon, who were matched right around the same time as Sam and I. I met Sam when he was 11 years old, and he is now 17. The picture to the left is of Sam and I when he was 12 years old and was taken not long after we were matched.

Sam comes from a broken home with parents who have abused drugs and have spent most of Sam's life in and out of prison. Luckily, Sam and his sister have been raised by his two grandparents. Although his grandparents are caring and supportive their family lives in poverty. His grandfather is disabled, and his grandmother works all the time just to be able to put food on the table. It has been a struggle for them to provide for Sam and his sister over the years, but they have done their very best. His grandmother enrolled him in Big Brothers Big Sisters for three reasons: 1. She felt he needed a solid and active male role model in his life. 2. Sam was at times a very angry and emotional child and was getting into trouble at school, so she hoped that his Big Brother would be a calming and encouraging presence in his life. 3. She felt that it would be good for Sam to get out of the house beyond just going to school everyday and experience some new things because she knew that they often didn't have the time or money to help him explore his interests and the Lawrence community.

On our match day, Sam cried because he was so happy to get a Big Brother. After our match meeting, we went out to get ice cream at Syllas and Maddie's and asked each other questions to get to know one another.

I was also present at John and Sheldon's match meeting because I was training as a Case Manager at the time. Sheldon reacted to his new mentor, John, a lot differently than Sam. Sheldon was very quiet and appeared to be sizing John up. He admitted later that he was skeptical because John was a lot older than he had expected and joked that it was more like getting a "Big Grandpa." John is a professor and the Director of the Honors Program in the KU School of Business.

Like Sam, Sheldon also comes from a broken home. His mother is a single-parent with multiple kids. She worked full time and found it difficult to give Sheldon much one-on-one attention. She enrolled Sheldon in Big Brothers Big Sisters for the same reasons Sam's grandmother had enrolled him.

John and Sheldon did not have many interests in common at first, and the relationship did not take off immediately as it had for Sam and I. John had had some previous experience mentoring, however, and was very patient, encouraging, and open to trying whatever interested Sheldon. John understood the importance of listening and made it his mission to encourage Sheldon's interests by taking an interest in them himself. They first bonded over pizza. Sheldon is a hand-on type of guy who loves cooking and fixing cars, so they began cooking. Even now, many years later, John and Sheldon still love to make pizza together from scratch. John also now admits that he was pretty relieved to find something they both enjoyed doing together other than fixing cars because it is so far outside of his wheelhouse.

Sam and I have also tried a wide variety of activities together over the years. We have gone on bike rides. We have had Nerf gun wars in the park. We have cooked together. During the winter months when we couldn't be outside, we played epic games of Risk. We have worked on his homework together. I have watched him catch his first fish and get his first job. I was there to listen to him and comfort him when he got his heart broken for the first time. He was also there for me when I didn't get a promotion I thought I was going to get, and there to congratulate me when I found out that I was going to be a father for the first time.

Both Sam and Sheldon are now seniors in high school. Both of them will be graduating in May of 2018. Sam will be the first in three generations to graduate from high school. Both Sam and Sheldon will be the first in their family to go on to college, and believe it or not, both are excited about taking the next step into higher education. Sheldon's mom marvels at how much Sheldon has matured over the past several years and he is extremely helpful to her at home, particularly with his younger siblings. Sam has also come a long way emotionally and is much more calm and self-confident.

John and I are of course not solely responsible for these outcomes, nor is Big Brothers Big Sisters, but our hope is that we have provided them with the support and encouragement necessary for them to believe in themselves. The truth is, and John and I agree on this, that Sam and Sheldon have had an important impact on our lives as well, and I truly believe Sam and I will be brothers for life.

**"Young boys are more likely to believe in themselves if they know there's someone, somewhere, who shares that belief." --Wes Moore from The Other Wes Moore**

2. Refer to your 2017 application for funding; provide a brief narrative of the activities funded with City funds.

Our Match Support Specialists continued their work of making new one-to-one matches between qualified volunteers and at-risk children in our community in 2017, as well as continuing to support and supervise our existing matches. Each Match Support Specialist is assigned a number of matches in which they supervise, offer guidance, assist with any problems and engage in healthy communication with the youth, the parent/guardian of the youth, and the volunteer. Initial and annual reporting through participant completed surveys is done with each Match to keep track of outcomes and agency progress.

3. Refer to your 2017 application for funding; provide specific detail (use supportive documents, if needed) to demonstrate what progress was made toward your proposed outcomes.

- In 2017 Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters served 218 kids in our community based and school based programs.
- It was reported in Performance Outcome Evaluation surveys (POE) by parents, mentors, and teachers that 80.4% of those 218 kids had greater self-confidence, 59.1% improved their academic performance, and 55.3% were more prepared to avoid substance abuse.
- The average length of a match in the KSBBBS serving Douglas County in 2017 was 32 months, which is well over the national average of 18 months.
- Our "Bigs in Blue" program, where local law enforcement officers volunteer to serve as mentors for youth facing significant adversity, grew in 2017 from 16 officers serving as mentors to 28, including

officers from the Lawrence Police Department, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, and the KU Public Safety Office.

- Over 150 Lawrence residents attended information sessions to learn about volunteering as a mentor in 2017.

4. Refer to the line-item budget provided in your 2017 application for funding; is this accurate to how your allocation was actually spent? If no, what changed and why?

All funds received from the City of Lawrence were expended according to our 2017 proposal.