

# GREAT GUYS MENTOR



In addition to celebrating the more than 300 Matches that BBBS-Mercer has supported this year, our annual picnic served to officially launch our "Great Guys Mentor" recruitment campaign, which is aimed at encouraging more men to volunteer as mentors.

The "Great Guys Mentor" campaign aims to raise awareness about the need for male mentors and to encourage men to volunteer and become BBBS-Mercer Bigs. BBBS-Mercer currently has a waiting list of 50 youth, 37 of whom are boys or young men, and some of whom have been on the list for more than a year.

"We know that the pandemic has made it more difficult for people to volunteer, but we also know that there are many Great Guys out there who want to make a difference," said Tara Belford, BBBS-Mercer's Interim Executive Director. "We want to show them that they have the power to positively influence a child's life by reinforcing and encouraging a young person's better instincts. And that it doesn't take a huge time commitment but comes with amazing rewards."

Belford added, "We believe that highlighting and celebrating those Great Guys in our community who have made time to mentor might just convince some other Great Guys to sign up."

Mentoring as a Big with BBBS-Mercer requires a minimum commitment of five (5) hours a month over the course of at least one year.

## SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

At BBBS-Mercer, we depend on the kindness and generosity of numerous individual and foundation donors to sustain our mission. In fact, 100% of our operational funding is made possible through contributions. We do not charge a dime for any of our services; there are no membership fees, enrollment charges, or add-on costs. Every service we provide – every match intervention, Little activity, hour of mentoring – is funded by YOUR generosity.

**Donate today!**



[mercerbbbs.org](http://mercerbbbs.org)



@BBBSMercer



@BBBSMercer

### Volunteering Info:



### Donation Info:



# LEADERSHIP CHANGES



Dear Friends,

I want to extend my thanks to our dedicated Board, incredible staff, generous supporters, and our Bigs, Littles, and families for the privilege of leading Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mercer County over the last few years.

I am incredibly proud of all our team has accomplished- particularly stabilizing the organization after the pandemic. We launched new and innovative programs that will lead to even more youth served in the years to come while increasing the number of young people currently served in our Community and Site-Based programs by over 50% between 2021 and 2022.

It is bittersweet to be leaving an organization I have been a part of since 2015, but I am excited to begin a new chapter in my career- joining BBBSA's Government Relations team. I remain dedicated to our mission of creating one to one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth because we know that the mentoring gap has only widened since the pandemic, and with it, the critical need for funding, policies and legislation that support our proven mentoring model.

I am delighted that the Board has named our Director of Community-Based Programs, Tara Belford, Interim Executive Director as they conduct the search for a new leader. Tara has been with the organization for over 16 years, and I am confident that her knowledge and experience will ensure our programs run smoothly during this interim period.

I look forward to maintaining relationships with the Board, staff and fellow Bigs as a Big Sister in our Community-Based program and I hope you will join me in continuing to support this vital part of the social service structure of Mercer County.



In community,

*Kate Noonan*

Kate Noonan



On behalf of the entire team at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mercer County, I want to wish our wonderful former Executive Director, Kate Noonan, all the best in her new role working for our National BBBSA office! Kate did an amazing job rebuilding our organization following the challenges and setbacks posed by the COVID pandemic. With her enthusiastic leadership style, Kate made an indelible mark on our agency and will not be soon forgotten. I am honored to serve as Interim Executive Director during this transition period. During my rewarding 16 years as Director of Community-Based Programs and 10 years as a Big Sister, I developed many partnerships and engaged in extensive community outreach. Now I'm excited to contribute at an even higher level. Our agency is on a path to continued growth and success, and I am proud to be part of that!



*Tara Belford*

Tara Belford  
Interim Executive Director

## Please welcome two new staff members and two fabulous summer interns to the BBBS-Mercer Team!

[Francis Chiocca](#) is a recent graduate of Rutgers University and is excited to be on the BBBS-Mercer team as a Development and Marketing Associate.

[Laura I. Leal](#) has been a Volunteer Recruiter and Family Specialist at BBBS-Mercer since January 2023.

[Chloe Alpert](#), a student from Rutgers University, is joining BBBS-Mercer as the Program Intern this summer. She is very excited to be working alongside the BBBS team!

[Lina Kim](#), a rising sophomore at Princeton University, will be working as a Fund Development intern and looks forward to working with the BBBS-Mercer team and exploring new ways to better support the local community.

## More Staff News



Francis, Laura, Chloe, Lina



## 20th Annual Golf Outing



Our 20th Annual Golf Classic took place on June 5th at Trenton Country Club. It was a hit amongst the 80 golfers who attended.

Highlights include:

- Don Baliko hitting a hole-in-one!
- Course Challenge Winners:
- Michael Wybraniec: Closest to the Pin
- Bridget Verdel (women's division) and Zach Martin (men's division): Longest Drive winners.
- Team Leaderboard winners: The foursome from Princeton Wealth Advisors of Raymond

Our raffle winners took home some incredible prizes including a \$650 watch donated by Hamilton Jewelers and a flying lesson from Princeton Flying School. All in all, we raised over \$40,000 to help us in our mission to ignite the power and promise of youth in Mercer County. We'd like to thank our wonderful OneAsk sponsors ETS, EY & BBBS-Mercer Board Trustee Mike Petrane, Archer & BBBS-Mercer Board Trustee Bruce Gorman, Christine's Hope for Kids, Customers Bank & BBBS-Mercer Board Trustee Debbie Runyon, Stark & Stark & BBBS-Mercer Board Trustee Domenic B. Sanginiti, Jr., Esq, and Wawa along with Golf Challenge Sponsors Princeton Wealth Advisors of Raymond James, At Home Construction, ESTIR Insurance. Our Tee Sponsors include Rich's Carpet One Floor and Home; BlueCap Economic Advisors & BBBS-Mercer President Gary Marx; Hamilton Jewelers; HCC Commercial Contracting; the Next Gen Board of BBBS-Mercer; Patrick Schlagel, CPA; The Board of Trustees of BBBS-Mercer; and RBC Wealth Management. We could not have done it without your support!

## Annual Spring Picnic

On Thursday, June 15th we celebrated our Littles by hosting our annual picnic. We gathered in Veterans Park Hamilton for food and activities that allow Bigs and Littles to spend time together and enjoy a bouncy house, volleyball, and more. Attendees got to learn more about our mission, network with current Bigs and learn about the rewards of mentoring, and meet the BBBS-Mercer staff and some of the NextGen Advisory Council. We would not be able to put on this event without the help of M&T Bank,, Wegmans, Acme, and Five Below.

## NBA REPLAY TOUR

Stuart Law, his son Zach (a Sports Administration major at University of Miami, Florida), and Mikey Wong were the grand winners of a private tour of the NBA Replay Center, led by EVP of Media for the NBA, Steven Hellmuth. "My son learned a lot and I think it opened his eyes some more regarding possible work opportunities in the sports industry," reported Stuart. Not only did they get to see behind-the-scenes work from the NBA on the night that the Nuggets clinched the NBA Title, they also supported BBBS-Mercer and our Littles through their bidding. As Stuart also noted, "of course, the proceeds go to a great cause."

## COMING SOON...

Some upcoming events to look out for:

- BBBS-Mercer's Autumn Culinaire. (October 19th.)
- BBBS-Mercer's SweetRide Car Raffle. Stay posted on raffle ticket sales in the future. You could win a car!



# MATCH STORY HIGHLIGHTS

⇒ EZRA + BRUCE

⇒ KHARI + SHAWNE

⇒ WORKPLACE MENTORING

“ I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been matched with such a special and gifted kid. In the past 4 years I have seen him evolve into a well-rounded young man.”



- Bruce Diamond

Big Brother (BB) Bruce, a retired sales rep manager for an eye pharmaceutical company from East Windsor, NJ, is described as laid back, easy going, flexible, grounded, and has multiple interests. Little Brother (LB) Ezra is 14 years old and from Hamilton, NJ. He can be described as introverted, bright, and easy going. Mom enrolled him into the program in hopes to give him an additional male mentor and someone to help him communicate better. Together, they have enjoyed grabbing meals, bowling, movies, and miniature golf. Recently, LB has received awards in school for his exemplary grades and has improved his communication skills by initiating conversations with BB.

## A Generational Connection

What do Big Sister (BS) Shawne and Little Sister (LS) Khari have in common? Their 4th grade teacher, that's who! Since being matched over a year ago, BS (a TCNJ student) and LS (now in 5th grade) have spent their weekly lunch-time visits at school chatting, hanging out in the cafeteria, basking in the warm temps during recess, and every once in a while, reviewing school assignments. Shawne is Khari's second Big – Khari was previously enrolled while in elementary school and loved the program so much that her mom decided to re-enroll her. Next semester, Shawne will be studying abroad in Germany. But the friendship is on track to continue through emails and weekly FaceTime chats. Khari is looking forward to joining Shawne's adventures abroad vicariously!



End of Year Party!



This past school year, BBBS-Mercer continued its partnership with Princeton University for our Workplace Mentoring Program. As in years past, sophomores and juniors from TCHS (Trenton Central High School) were paired with employees from Princeton University where they met twice per month in-person on campus. The students ranged from various learning communities at TCHS, including Business and Restaurant, Communications, and Medical and STEM. Throughout the year, they participated in topics ranging from Financial Literacy, Health and Wellness, Goal Setting, Career Opportunities and general lunch and chat time with their mentors. The group ended on a celebratory note when all participants received tokens from Princeton and certificates from BBBS-Mercer for completing one year in the program. The students plan to return in the new academic year where they will learn more about the college application process and take some long-awaited campus tours.



## Program Spotlight: Sports & Art Buddies

Sports Buddies is a nationwide initiative aimed at encouraging youth to be physically active while also providing them with valuable mentorship and sports-related skills such as teamwork, good sportsmanship, and resiliency. Through a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, we pair youth one-to-one with a college-aged mentor from The College of New Jersey. Together, they participate in twice-monthly sessions where they learn different sports and develop life-changing relationships with their volunteer Bigs. We are planning to launch a concurrent program called Art Buddies. This is for the youths who want to get in touch with their creative and artistic side while also learning valuable life skills from their mentors.

A big thanks for their end of year Giving Back Charity Events. Because of their efforts to celebrate what we do at BBBS-Mercer, we have raised thousands of dollars to ignite potential in Mercer County youth. Every service we provide – every match intervention, Little activity, hour of tutoring – is funded by donor support.

## Community Partners: Macy's and Subaru

