



talkbig

Fall 2009



LOCAL MATCH TAKES ON FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE

When Krista first suggested that she and her Little Sister, Becca, now 14, raise money for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago, she had no idea how involved they would get.

“It was kind of a random idea for something we could do together,” said Krista Sonneson, a Business Account Manager for Sears Holdings who has been volunteering with the agency for two years. “Plus, Big Brothers Big Sisters has done a lot for Becca, so I thought it would be a good lesson for her to give back.”

The pair began fundraising in November by selling Krista’s spare dinner cruise tickets. > > >

*Little-Big team proves a Little creativity can
make a Big difference... in more ways than one*

“The response was amazing,” said Krista. “Complete strangers on Craigslist started e-mailing us well-wishes and fundraising ideas. Soon, word spread around my personal network and I started receiving notes and donations from people I hadn’t spoken to in years. Sometimes you start to doubt the good in people, but this experience has been very comforting. The kindness and support we have received has been amazing. And Becca has felt that too.”

Since their Craigslist sales, the two have raised money by working concessions at the Sears Center, selling candy and setting up a website to collect online donations (www.giveforward.org/BBBS). “Becca’s very committed to our goal of \$10,000,” said Krista, who recalled her Little suggesting \$35,000 as their initial fundraising target. “People think \$10,000 is ambitious, but we’ve already raised more than \$7,500. We’re well on our way to reaching our goal – which is such a great experience for us both.”

“Krista and Becca have done a tremendous job of raising money for our agency,” said Gerri Cicchinelli, director of fund development. “They know first-hand the value of the program, so their passion for sharing their story and raising money to help more kids is really inspirational. It is also a great reminder that we can all make a difference. Every dollar really does add up.”

Fundraising is not all the pair does. The two, who get together an average of once a week, enjoy trips to the movies, plays and other activities. For Becca, the oldest of six girls living with a mother who – until recently – was single, the Match offers the opportunity to get out of the house and explore her own interests and personality. “At home, Becca is often the big sister who is helping prepare food and care for her younger sisters,” said Krista. “She has a very supportive family, but our relationship offers her



Krista and Becca count the money they raised (and sample their product) after a candy sale.

some space to be herself. And, I’m another positive adult in her life – someone else she wants to impress.” In fact, Krista adds, “Becca says she likes playing sports more now because I go to most of her events. It’s more fun to play when she knows someone is there watching her.”

Their special “sister” relationship also makes it easier to talk about certain issues, so Becca’s mother sometimes asks Krista to talk to Becca about things going on at home or school. “Our talks have helped a lot. Becca’s really opened up. She talks a lot more and has a lot of confidence. And her mom says she’s doing better at home.”

“It’s funny,” said Krista, who commented that she’s gotten as much – if not more – out of the experience as Becca. “People ask me all the time if I really think I’m making a difference. They think all we do is take kids bowling and to the movies. But meeting week after week – over time, feeling that feeling and having it light up your life – it’s hard to communicate, but it really is an extension of your family. It is someone you *really* care for. Not just during the outings, but in the little moments.”

Last November, Becca’s mother got married and Krista was invited to attend. After the ceremony, the family was at the front of the church taking pictures and suddenly Becca ran to the back where Krista was standing and announced: “Krista needs to be in these. She’s my sister.”

“That fact that she would think of me as family at her mom’s wedding is beyond words,” said the Big Sister. “The experience of being a Big Sister is very personal. And yes, you really are making a difference in that child’s life.” ■

Thank You for Making our Fifth Annual Golf Classic a Success

Spending a Monday playing golf is tough work, but somebody had to do it. And we’re so glad they did!

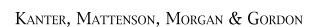
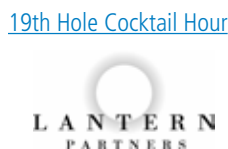
Thank you to the 184 golfers and event sponsors who joined us June 22 at Harborside International for a brilliant day of golf, food and fun. The event raised a record \$214,000 for our programs, which is equal to the cost of providing support to 214 of our mentor matches for an entire year.

Special thanks to Roberto Garza of the Chicago Bears and Fox Sports Anchor Corey McPherrin, who served as Honorary Co-Chairs of the event. The two local celebrities helped get the group in the spirit of giving as hosts of our live auction. ■



Thank you to Presenting Sponsor Accenture and our other major sponsors, whose early commitments allowed us to proceed with plans for a wonderful day. Pictured here, Accenture golfers Dean Teglia, Jeff Malehorn, Jim Wejman and Don Klink take a break during a beautiful day of golf.

Sponsors





CEO Art Mollenhauer (right) meets with Rick, a father of four and IL Dept. of Transportation employee who still meets regularly with his Big Brother after 20 years. The two hold an agency poster that featured Rick 15 years ago. "This is why we do this work," said Art. "We are helping create meaningful mentor relationships that empower young people to build productive, positive lives. This lifelong friendship is a true success story."

As we end our 2009 fiscal year, I am proud to report that with the hard work and commitment of our staff, volunteers, donors and 41 board members, we have risen to the challenge of operating successfully in a difficult year. In the past year, we have taken a very disciplined approach – evaluating every element of our operations to prioritize spending, streamline processes and most importantly, not interrupt any of our services or reduce quality to the community.

In total, we were able to serve a record 1,314 children without receiving any additional funding over last year. What's more, we were able to do so without making any drastic cuts to staff or programs, cuts that would have diminished our quality of service. I am confident the challenges of the past year have made us better. **At our core, we are stronger, smarter, more efficient and more prepared to meet the growing need in our future.**

I am very pleased to share that I am not the only one who feels this way. More than 4,000 donors have supported us in this very difficult year. In addition, because

of our shared success, we have been recognized by two prestigious foundations with multi-year grants:

In 2009, the Wallace Foundation selected us as one of 14 organizations to receive a grant and participate in a four-year initiative to strengthen the financial capability of our organization. To date, we have received an initial grant of \$115,000 and are working closely with Fiscal Management Associates to improve our fiscal infrastructure and financial management practices. Assuming we achieve mutually agreed-upon performance benchmarks, we will be eligible to receive another grant from Wallace in the amount of \$125,000 in 2011 to increase our cash reserves. The overall purpose of this initiative, called "Building on Quality: Strengthening Financial Management," is to expand our ability to serve as many children and youth as possible with high-quality services.

Likewise, The Atlantic Philanthropies approached our

organization to help execute a new, four-city program with LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) Chicago designed to help middle school students do well in school, make healthy decisions and prepare for success in high school and future careers. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago will be responsible for providing the mentoring component for the Chicago Elev8 program, which will target 6th-8th graders at four schools located in Pilsen, Logan Square, Chicago Lawn and Auburn Gresham. A \$350,000, two-year grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies will support our work in these communities and allow us to identify long-term partner organizations with large numbers of qualified volunteers.

It is important to note that these funds are designated for new programs, so they do not reduce our funding need. What is significant for our existing programs is that these two organizations – experts in identifying the non-profit "best bets" in which to invest – have chosen us. We are honored by this acknowledgement and humbled by their trust. **I have no doubt, however, that they have made a wise investment.**

Looking to the next year, the challenge – to serve more children on fewer dollars while building critical operating reserves – continues. We are well positioned for the road ahead. I urge you to remain by our side and join me in giving your generous support to this fine organization. Becca's story in this newsletter is a wonderful example of the difference our program makes for youth in need in our community. There are 1,313 more stories just like hers, and these stories – these life-changing outcomes – are not possible without your support.

Thank you for your trust and ongoing investment in our program. ■

big NEWS

Introducing Our New Board Chairman, Mark Kaufman

We are pleased to announce that Mark Kaufman, president of AthletiCo, was elected July 16 as the new Chairman of our Board of Directors. As a father of three, he is deeply committed to improving the lives of vulnerable youth in our area.

"I am honored to serve as the Chairman of this excellent organization," said Kaufman. "While our organization has remained strong through this slow economy, my first priority is to work closely with our partners, board and staff members to *keep* the Agency on target in these difficult economic times. We will then focus on developing a strategic direction for the next three years to meet the ongoing community needs. I hope that together with donors and volunteers, we can create opportunities to serve more local children who need the support of a positive adult role model.

"These children are our community's future," he added. "I believe that with every smile, improved report card, learned skill or new hope for the future, we are not only improving that child's life, but we are helping to improve our entire community. The long-term impact of our work is tremendous. I look forward to helping strengthen the agency's presence in our community and to helping more people recognize how important this work is for each of us." ■



Since joining the Board in 2004, Mark Kaufman has played a key role in raising awareness and resources for the agency.

RAISE MONEY...

SAVE THE DATE FOR PURSE POWER

Raising funds for our kids is *in the bag* with this popular event. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago's signature **Purse Power** event is just around the corner, so mark your calendars for November 19, 2009. This first-class event, to be held at the Golden Triangle, will feature a cocktail reception, passed hors d'oeuvres and a raffle of 25 of fall's newest purses!



PARTIAL LIST OF GENEROUS SUPPORT WE RECEIVED BETWEEN APRIL 1 AND JUNE 30, 2009:

President's Circle (\$25,000 +)

Chicago Teacher's Union
Bowl for Kids' Sake
Polk Bros. Foundation
The Wallace Foundation
Topfer Family Foundation

Dream Maker Circle (\$10,000 +)

Accenture LLP
American Eagle Outfitters
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Athletico Bowl for
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McCormick Tribune
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REAM Foundation

Magic Maker Circle (\$5,000 +)

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The Harvey L. Miller
Family Foundation
Ullico Management
Company

William Waddell

Match Maker Circle (\$1,000 +)

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Jim Vail
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THANK YOU

Thank you to our donors, whose funding allows us to provide high quality, professional support to our participants. Our team of social workers and program specialists work hard to orient new families to our program; screen and train volunteers; make strong mentor Matches; provide guidance and resources to our Bigs; and lend ongoing support and advocacy to our Littles and their families. This type of personal, year-round planning and case management is essential to the success and quality of our program and costs an average of \$1,000 per year, per Match. We could not provide this type of support without your generous gifts.



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Metropolitan Chicago

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