



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saginaw Bay Area

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 2, 2007

CONTACT: SHELLY GREENE
(989) 755-6558

Big Brothers Big Sisters receives federal funds to serve 300 children of incarcerated parents in Saginaw and Bay counties.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saginaw Bay Area this week was awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, to match children of incarcerated parents with adult mentors as part of the agency's Amachi program.

The Amachi program was initiated at Big Brothers Big Sisters in 2004. Amachi brings people from faith communities together with mentees to offer hope and understanding through a positive community-based mentoring relationship. Youth and their mentors meet for at least four hours monthly. More than 178 youth have been served through the program. The agency's goal is to reach 300 additional youth.

"We are pleased that our agency now is able to continue offering the Amachi program," said Shelly Greene, executive director. "Our youth today face unparalleled challenges – from absent parents and gang violence to a lack of education and increasing poverty. Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks to address the root causes of these problems by providing opportunities for youth to interact with adults in positive relationships."

A recent survey of youth in the Amachi program found:

- 80 percent of youth demonstrated an improved ability to make decisions.
- 85 percent of youth demonstrated improved self confidence.

- 65 percent of youth demonstrated improved academic performance.
- 86 percent of youth demonstrated an improved attitude toward school.
- 72 percent of youth demonstrated improved relationships with their family.
- 65 percent of youth demonstrated improved relationships with their peers.

“We always are in need of mentors,” said Greene. “And participating as a Big Brother or Big Sister also has benefits – it’s one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences you will ever have.

“Being a mentor is like being a friend – everyone can do it.”

Anyone interested in volunteering with the Amachi program or who knows a youth who could benefit from a positive mentoring relationship should contact the agency at (989) 755-6558 or visit the agency’s Web site at www.sagbaybbbs.org.

####

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been serving Saginaw and Bay counties since 1953. The agency’s mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of youth by providing professionally supported one-to-one mentoring relationships. The agency serves youth ages 5 to 18 from families where one adult figure of the same sex is either not available or is available on a limited basis. Research has shown these youth are “at risk” for certain unhealthy or destructive behaviors ranging from truancy to increased drug usage, alcoholism and violence. Research also consistently demonstrates that one-to-one mentoring helps youth overcome the many challenges they face.