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## Breakthrough Study Finds Adults Mentored as Children in Big Brothers Big Sisters are Better Educated and Wealthier than Peers

New Study Released at Big Brothers Big Sisters' National Conference Suggests America's  
Largest Donor-Supported Network of  
Volunteer Mentors for Youth Breaks Cycles Linked to Poverty

**Miami, FL, June 16, 2009** -- A study conducted by Harris Interactive® on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters finds adults mentored as children through Big Brothers Big Sisters are more likely than peers with similar backgrounds but who were not involved in the program to have a four-year college degree and incomes of \$75,000 or more. They also report strong relationships with their spouses, children and friends.

Big Brothers Big Sisters released the findings this week during its National Conference. The 2009 conference is being hosted in Miami and is sponsored by Comcast.

“The children we serve are among America’s most vulnerable, whether they have one parent, live in households experiencing poverty or have a parent who is incarcerated,” said Judy Vredenburg, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America President and Chief Executive Officer.

“Independent research has told us for some time that Big Brothers Big Sisters improves the odds that children we serve will succeed educationally and socially. This is our first large-scale examination of the long-term benefits, suggesting we have the potential to break cycles too often associated with family and community poverty.”

The cross-sectional study was commissioned by Big Brothers Big Sisters to gather evidence that its long-term structured mentoring program's effects reach far beyond the time that children are enrolled in the program. The nation's largest donor supported volunteer mentoring network's 255,000 community- and school-based mentoring matches depends on donations to recruit, carefully match and screen volunteers and provide ongoing support to the mentors, children and their families.

Among the study's specific findings:

- Alumni were 75% more likely than non-alumni to have received a four-year college degree (28% of alumni vs. 16% of non-alumni).
- Alumni were 39% more likely than non-alumni to have current household incomes of \$75,000 or higher (46% of alumni vs. 33% of non-alumni).
- A majority of alumni are extremely or very satisfied with their relationships to friends (72%), family (65%) and spouses (62%). Fewer non-alumni report the same level of satisfaction (46%, 50% and 40%, respectively).
- Approximately two in three (64%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with life compared to just over one in three (35%) non-alumni.
- A majority of alumni (62%) perceive themselves to have achieved a higher level of success than their peers who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters. Furthermore, this is twice as many as the 31% of non-alumni who report being more successful than other people they grew up with.
- Adult Littles are more likely than non-alumni to be engaged in their community over the past 12 months, particularly when it comes to volunteering (52% vs 35%, respectively) and holding a leadership role in an organization working on an issue (29% vs. 16%, respectively).

“One of the most effective strategies for successful fundraising is to demonstrate the long-term value of our program,” Vredenburgh said. “Foundations, individuals, corporations and public funders – want to invest in programs proven to change lives and break cycles of poverty.”

A little more than half of the alumni Littles who participated in the study grew up in single-parent homes (52%) and described their childhood financial situation as worse off than the average American household (51%). The Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni reported that having a “Big” in their lives positively influenced their self confidence, provided stability and changed their perspectives on life, taught them new things, influenced aspects of their education, pushing them to set higher goals and make better decisions.

### **Methodology**

Between March 3 and April 16 2009, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 449 adults, 200 of whom participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters as “Littles” for at least one year during their childhood and 249 who never participated in the program. Alumni Littles were sampled from a combination of Harris Interactive’s panel of respondents and Big Brothers Big Sisters lists. All 249 of the non alumni were sampled from the Harris Interactive panel of online respondents. The non-alumni segment allows for a comparison between Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni and adults who had a similar profile as youth but who did not have a Big Brother or Big Sister as a youth. A full methodology is available.

#### About Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters helps vulnerable children beat the odds. The organization depends on donations to help recruit volunteers and reach more children. Funding is used to conduct background checks on volunteers to ensure child safety; and provide ongoing support for children, families and volunteers to build and sustain long-lasting relationships. Big Brothers Big Sisters is proven to improve children’s odds for succeeding in school, behaving nonviolently, avoiding drugs and alcohol, and breaking negative cycles. Headquartered in Philadelphia and with nearly 400 agencies across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves more than a quarter million children. Learn how you can change how children grow up in America by going to [BigBrothersBigSisters.org](http://BigBrothersBigSisters.org).

#### About Harris Interactive

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