

## Big Brothers Big Sisters offers guidance by matching youths with mentors

By Jessica Bruha Transcript Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, September 27, 2015 5:38 pm

Rylee Anderson, a “Little”, and Meredith Kueck, a “Big”, were matched in March by Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Oklahoma in Norman. It’s a match both feel lucky to have, said Elizabeth Stoverink, match support specialist.

Recently, Rylee was on the phone with Stoverink to ask an important question.

“Rylee said that she had already asked her mom and her Big Sister, Meredith, this question, but she wanted to double check with me to make sure. Rylee asked, ‘How long will I get to keep my Big Sister?’” Stoverink said.

Her reply to Rylee was, “For as long as you want.” It was an answer Rylee was ecstatic to hear, although her mother and Meredith had already given her the same answer, Stoverink said.

“Rylee and Meredith always have a ton of fun together,” she said. “They are both really active and enjoy going swimming, going to the park and the participating in Big Brothers Big Sisters match activities, like Cops and Bobbers.”

The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

Right now in Norman, BBBS have a little over 200 active matches and they’ll likely serve close to 450 children this year. With six sites across the state, the agency will serve a total of about 1,400 children this year, said Hayley Garrison, vice president of programs.

“We have about 100 children in the Norman office that we need Bigs for,” Garrison said. “The majority are going to be boys. We get less male volunteers, but more children are signing up.”

With Oklahoma being one of the top-ranked states in the country for the number of female



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Catherine Cox looks at the silent auction items Aug. 29, during the Big Taste at the Embassy Suites. The food-filled event also had a silent and live auction, the proceeds of which went to help Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma.

incarcerations, Garrison said they also have a program for children who have incarcerated parents.

“We know that’s a problem in Oklahoma,” she said. “About 40 percent of kids in our program have a parent incarcerated.”

Since children with an incarcerated parent often need additional support and guidance, BBBS’s Amachi program connects children with role models from all walks of life, but particularly those from religious organizations.

“House of worship and their members are able to provide a safe, stable environment for children to develop into responsible young men and women,” the BBBS website states.

The organization has both a school based program and community based program.

Garrison said the community based program allows Bigs to go pick their Little up and go out and do something in the community, whether it’s going to the park, catching a movie or grabbing a bite to eat.

Norman has a strong school based program though, Garrison said, which allows a Big to consistently go meet up for lunch with their Little at school.

Garrison said the school based program often works well for college students who can go over to an elementary school in between classes; whereas business professionals typically get involved with the community based program since they have evenings and weekends available.

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma, visit [bbbsok.org](http://bbbsok.org) or call the Norman office at 364-3722.

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