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## **Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County**

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Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz

County

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#### **Abstract**

## Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for BBBS of Santa Cruz County – Paneda

Children in low-income single-parent households are more likely to experience systemic challenges, such as dropping out of school. Big Brothers Big Sisters is a nonprofit organization that pairs youth and adult volunteers to form a mentor/mentee bond. This provides youth with a positive and supportive environment. Youth can be enrolled from ages 7 to 14 and stay in the program until they turn 18. A challenge the agency is facing is not having a big enough pool to provide youth with the best possible mentor. The purpose of this capstone project was to widen the pool of “Big Brothers” and “Little Sisters” volunteers. To accomplish this, an awareness campaign to recruit volunteers was implemented. Flyers were strategically placed throughout the community in locations that men and youth girls frequent. The project assessment revealed that the overall number of volunteers increased but the increase in the focus population was limited.

*Keywords:* awareness campaign, recruitment strategy, mentor, volunteer, adversity

## **I. Agency Description**

## Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for BBBS of Santa Cruz County – Paneda

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a national nonprofit organization that was founded in 1904. Since its founding, the organization has made its way into all 50 states and 12 countries around the world. In 1982, Big Brothers Big Sisters was implemented in Santa Cruz County. Since then they have made it their goal to “create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth”(BBBS, 2021). The organization allows for all youth ages 7 to 14 to enroll to find a mentor that can support them. Their vision is to have all youth achieve their potential. Although the organization accepts all youth, most of the youth who are referred or apply are those who are in low-income or single-parent households. They are the ones most commonly applied. The organization also has a trans-mentoring program in which trans youth are matched with a trans adult individual to better serve the diversity in the county. BBBS of Santa Cruz is one of few agencies that provides this program for trans individuals. They do their best to make matches between Bigs and Little with similar interests in order to create the best possible matches. They want their matches to thrive and benefit from their relationship. Support services include case management where the matches are monitored and overlooked for progress being made, referrals to outside services, enrollment where volunteers are being considered and youth are being accepted, and free opportunities that include bonding between families and children. The agency also hosts events to gain sponsors where professionals can see their impact in person.

## **II. Communities Served by the Agency**

As of 2017, the agency served over 6,500 kids (BBBS, 2021). The agency currently has about 45 active matches and hundreds on the waiting list. There are about 57% Little Brothers and about 35% Little Sisters. The remaining 8% are Littles in the trans-mentoring program. A majority of the clients are of Hispanic descent. Littles consist of about 70% Hispanics, 10%

Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for BBBS of Santa Cruz County – Paneda American Indians, and 10% African Americans. Most of these youth come from low-income single-parent households and experience a lack of support, lack of guidance, and poverty. About 46% of the parents or guardians of the youth make an annual income of less than 30k. Compared to the population of Santa Cruz County, about 30% of the population makes an annual income of less than 50k (census reporter). The youth mostly reside in Watsonville while the mentors mostly reside in Santa Cruz.

### III. Problem description

#### Macro Problem statement:

*Children in low-income single-parent households are more likely to experience systemic challenges.*

There are currently more than a hundred volunteers on the waiting list to become a Big/Little. The reason there are so many volunteers waiting is that there aren't enough volunteers that the agency can match together. Many of the volunteers currently on the waiting list are either potential Big Sisters or Little Brothers so matching them has become difficult because parents and guardians usually request for their child's Big to be of the same gender. The number of potential Big Sisters outweighs the number of potential Little Sisters. Similarly, there are not enough Big Brothers for the amount of Little Brothers that are applying. This means there is a lack of both Little Sisters and Big Brothers. This is caused by the agency not having enough exposure. Many don't know what the organization is about and what they do, especially since the pandemic. Since the pandemic, it has become a challenge to get agency speakers in schools, which is where many of their clients are recruited from. Some mentors, parents, and guardians also fail to see the importance of youth having a mentor in their lives. Because of this, there are not enough mentors or mentees for the remaining Big Sisters and Little Brothers therefore

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matches have come to a halt. Another contribution to the issue is that women are more naturally inclined to help and nurture others. This is why there is an abundance of Big Sisters volunteering. As for Little Brothers, boys are more reckless and act out in class more frequently than girls. Teachers are more likely to notice when a boy is experiencing behavioral problems. As for girls, they usually suppress and hide their emotions so it's less likely a teacher will notice this. This causes teachers to refer more boys than girls to the program, leaving girls with fewer opportunities to succeed.

Having a mentor provides youth with greater opportunities and support that they might need, especially when they only have one parent. The bigger issue with this is that children in low-income single-parent households are more likely to experience systematic challenges. In a documentary titled "Absent" (Hunt, 2011), youth with only one parent were interviewed about their lives and challenges they have had to face. They found that these youth had a higher risk of suicide, school dropouts, behavioral disorders, chemical substance abuse, and incarceration. Another study also found that "children growing up with a single mother are more likely to become single parents themselves" (Hymowitz, 2020). This means the cycle will continue with their children. In fact, "children who live outside of the two-parent family tend to fare worse than those who live with two parents (Snibbe, 2020)." With mentors there to guide and support them, youth are less likely to experience this.

### **Consequences**

There are many consequences to youth living in low-income single-parent households. They can be divided into three sections. The first has to do with dropping out of school and facing incarceration. When youth live with only one parent, that parent may not have much time to watch over their child. They are more often than not preoccupied with other responsibilities

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such as work. Considering that they are a single parent, sometimes work can be their only form of income so it becomes a priority. However, with little to no time to connect with their children, they can be tempted to skip school. Youth often skip school from time to time but as it continues, it could lead to suspension. Many studies have found that suspension is a leading factor for students dropping out of school (Bird & Bassin, 2014). Dropping out of school can lead to even bigger consequences. It has been predicted that 82% of the future adult prison population and 85% of juvenile cases are going to be comprised of youth who drop out of school (Bird & Bassin, 2014).

Suicide and mental health issues are the second consequence youth may deal with. Single parenthood can cause “mental health problems for both children and adults, leading to greater psychological distress and depression” (Behere, 2017.) They face economic disadvantages that can cause stress in the household which then affects their mental health as well. Behere also found that “children from single-parent households were more than twice as likely to report internalizing problems and more than three times as likely to report externalizing problems compared to children from two-parent households.” This poses huge consequences for children living with only one parent. With more problems building up and no one to turn to, even more serious mental health issues can arise.

Behavioral disorder and substance abuse is the last possible consequence that is common among youth that come from low-income, single-parent households. Research shows that youth from these households are “more prone to delinquent behaviors, including drug and alcohol use” (Hemovich, 2009). Hemovich also found that youth with only one parent are more likely to display negative behaviors and abuse substances. Having an extra person to help them distinguish right from wrong can help correct and discourage these behaviors. Steering them

Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for BBBS of Santa Cruz County – Paneda away from dangerous activities results in positive life choices. Figure 1 presents the problem model discussed in this section.

**Figure 1: Problem Model**

CAUSES TO AGENCY PROBLEM	AGENCY-SPECIFIC “MICRO-LEVEL” PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY PROJECT	CONSEQUENCES TO AGENCY
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not enough exposure</li> <li>2. Lack of knowledge of the organization</li> <li>3. Most volunteers are inside due to pandemic</li> </ol>	<p>There is a lack of volunteers that are Big Brothers and Little Sisters</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not enough mentors or mentees for clients</li> <li>2. Clients are lacking guidance</li> <li>3. Matches are not reaching full potential</li> </ol>
CAUSES/RISK FACTORS TO BROADER HEALTH PROBLEM	BROADER “MACRO-LEVEL” HEALTH/SOCIAL PROBLEM	CONSEQUENCES TO SOCIETY
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Single parents don’t have time for children</li> <li>2. Children have less guidance</li> <li>3. Households don’t have the proper resources</li> </ol>	<p>Children in low-income single-parent households are more likely to experience systematic challenges</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Higher risk of suicide, school dropouts, behavioral disorders, chemical substance abuse, and incarceration</li> </ol>

## IV. Capstone Project

This capstone is an awareness and recruitment campaign consisting of creating flyers, posters, and social media content with agency information. These flyers and social media posts will talk about what the agency offers to youth and why having a mentor is beneficial. The goal is to get people interested in becoming a part of the program and have them apply. I will be including basic information about the agency such as the year it was founded and the different programs in place. It’s necessary to include services included which are being monitored and overlooked for progress being made by case managers and social workers, referrals to outside services, and free opportunities that include bonding between families and children. I’ll also include quotes from active matches so people can see the kind of impact the agency has on its clients.

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The purpose of the flyers and online content is to recruit more clients, specifically Little Sisters and Big Brothers. In an attempt to target this audience more, I will put these flyers in locations where young girls and men frequent. For example, businesses such as barbershops, nail salons, dance studios, and hair salons. I will also use the agency's social media accounts for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to distribute the content online.

### **V. Project Implementation**

This project will start with creating content to distribute. In order to create content with agency information, I have to research how other nonprofit organizations advertise their programs. I must also take a look at organizations that serve similar populations to that of Santa Cruz County. Looking at other BBBS organizations in different counties will contribute to how I choose what information to include in these flyers and social media posts. After researching and looking at advertising strategies, I will create the content online through websites such as Canva.

One of the most crucial parts of this project is contacting business owners that are willing to participate. Once I have identified which businesses will work best with recruiting older men and younger girls, I will need their permission to post flyers inside their businesses. I will hand out a certain number of flyers in each business and keep track of how many are left at the end of the period. I will use the information to determine whether or not these flyers and posts were effective in getting people interested and applying to become a Big or Little.

#### **Implementation Challenges**

There were a few challenges throughout this project. First was creating the flyers. I coordinated with staff members of the agency to decide what information and how the posters

Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for BBBS of Santa Cruz County – Paneda and flyers should look. We concluded that a brief description of the goal with some pictures of matches and quotes from clients would be best to include in the flyers. However, there was still a lot of trial and error. I made two separate flyers aimed at the two target audiences, potential Big Brothers and Little Sisters. For the poster directed at young girls, the original poster was pink. After reviewing it, we thought it was better to stick to the agency's colors to avoid the stereotype that pink is only for girls. I had not considered this before but creating both flyers with the same colors and theme was the best choice.

Another challenge that came up is the physical implementation. Many businesses and locations where I had hoped to implement the flyers denied their implementation. This is discouraging because barbershops are places many men go to often and it was a missed opportunity to attract Big Brothers.

Lastly was the issue of the QR code. The QR code that was created and put on the flyers also had a tracker so we could track the number of scans it had. Unfortunately, the QR code tracker was only available for 2 weeks. Although the QR code was still active and still working, I could no longer see how many scans it was getting. This made it harder to analyze the number of people it reached.

### **Scope of Work and Timeline**

The goal of this project is to raise awareness of the program and recruit more clients, specifically Big Brothers and Little Sisters. This was achieved through distributing content in the form of posters and flyers in local businesses that state the agency's goals and significance in the lives of youth. They are meant to expose more people to the agency and pique their interest. This will be used to educate the public and potential clients on the programs the agency provides.

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This project will attempt to recruit Big Brothers and Little Sister and analyze how effective this recruitment strategy is. Analyzing the effectiveness of this strategy will help determine what changes can be made to successfully recruit clients. If successful, this strategy will be continued to be used to encourage people to be involved with the agency. Table 1 describes the timeline of planned activities, dates, and the expected deliverables.

**Table 1. Scope of Work and Implementation Timeline**

Phases		Activities		Deliverables	Timeline
1	Select capstone project	1.1	Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor and agency staff	Generate a list of capstone project ideas	Sept 2021
		1.2	Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor and agency staff	Submit a list of ideas and final project options to mentor for review/ approval	Oct 2021
2	Plan project	2.1	Pick marketing and campaign method	Research other organizations marketing methods and draw inspiration from them	Nov 2021
		2.2	Discuss content to include for potential clients to mentor and agency staff	Research why girls benefit from having mentors. Look for information that can encourage Little Sisters to join. List of potential businesses	Dec 2021
3	Implement project	3.1	Discuss content/ information that will be used in marketing	Create brochures and flyers that will be used to recruit clients	Jan 2022
		3.1.1	Review brochure with my mentor	Print materials in the office	Jan 2022
		3.2	Discuss which businesses collaborate with the agency	Contact businesses (barbershops, nail salons, dance studios) and explain the project	Feb 2022
		3.3	Implement marketing method that was chosen	Start exposing information and agency to the public to attract potential clients through social media, flyers, posters	March 2022
4	Assess project	4.1	Contact business owners about the project	Research and estimate how many people were interested	April 2022

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		4.2	Discuss with mentors and agency staff about potential clients	Compare past engagement of potential Little Sisters	April 2022
5	Report on project findings	5.1	Prepare capstone presentation in the selected format	Present at Dress Rehearsal for grading	April 2022
		5.2	Final preparation for Capstone Festival	Final Capstone Festival presentation!	May 2022
		5.3	Complete reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	May 2022

### Conclusions

Researching marketing and recruitment strategies in cities with similar populations is important. I will need to look at other BBBS agency websites to help identify potential strategies. Because there is a lack of knowledge about the agency among the public, flyers will help with exposure. Social media will also help reach out to a greater audience, especially younger mentors who are more active online as well as youth who are potential Littles. I need to keep in contact with business owners where I implement the content in order to track how often people are taking flyers and if they are volunteering online after doing so. This could be a challenge but I could create a list of how the number of flyers I give to each business and track how many are taken each week. As for social media, I can keep track of engagement by looking at the post's statistics that the websites provide.

## VI. Project Assessment

### Expected Outcome

The expected outcome of this campaign is to raise awareness and attract more volunteers. The target audience was men and young girls. The agency needs more Big Brothers and Little Sisters in order to make better matches. Having more volunteers widens the pool of people who

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can be matched. Creating better matches means matches will be more successful and youth have a better chance of reaching their full potential.

The project's impact was assessed through communication with volunteers. After people applied online, we would schedule orientations with them to discuss the agency's goals and expectations. Here, we were able to ask how they heard about the program to conclude if flyers were effective in recruiting potential volunteers.

## **VII. Results of Assessment**

By the end of this campaign, 18 people applied to become either a Big or Little. The results were as follows: 1 Big Brother, 8 Big Sisters, 6 Little Brothers, 0 Little Sisters, 1 Trans Big Brothers, 1 Nonbinary Big, and 1 Trans Little Brother. Here we can see that of the targeted audience, only 1 Big Brother and 0 Little Sisters were reached. Although the outcome is not what we hoped for, we did gain volunteers which is always great. More importantly, 1 Trans Big Brother, 1 Nonbinary Big, and 1 Trans Little Brother applied. This is a big accomplishment considering how Big Brothers Big Sisters emphasizes the importance of inclusivity among all youth. However, this raises the question: how could we have reached the volunteers we need more of?

## **VIII. Recommendations**

After analyzing the results, I believe the campaign could have been more successful with a few changes. If I were to do this again, I would make some recommendations. First, I would suggest investing money in a QR code tracker. QR codes were put on the flyers created but they were not able to be used to their full potential. The first two weeks of activation of the QR code were free. Unfortunately, after the two weeks of the free trial, access to the number of scans was revoked. By investing in a QR Code tracker, the agency would be able to see if these flyers are

Volunteer Recruitment and Awareness Campaign for BBBS of Santa Cruz County – Paneda attracting volunteers. We would be able to see how many times each flyer has been scanned, what location is attracting more people, and what flyer design is more effective. This could be used to create more effective outreach methods.

I would also suggest identifying more locations to implement the flyers. As previously stated, many locations did not allow the implementation of posters or flyers. By contacting more businesses and expanding to other counties such as Monterey County, more potential volunteers could be reached. Having the ability to implement posters in locations where volunteers go to often would be extremely beneficial as well. If we had permission to put them up in more barbershops, the possibility of more men applying to become Big Brothers would have been greater. More exposure in more locations would help boost knowledge of the organization's programs.

Lastly, I would recommend adding a section to the online application. A section asking where they heard about the program would be beneficial. This would make it easier to identify where most of the exposure and knowledge of the agency comes from. The probably with asking volunteers directly during orientations or interviews is the wait time it takes to complete those meetings. Some take weeks to be able to fit a meeting into their schedule. By adding this to the online application, we would be able to strategize better outreach efforts more efficiently and quickly.

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