

# Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County:

Connecting, Mentoring, & Strengthening Youth Facing Adversity



Frank Jr. (far left) and Mariah (top) were recently matched with volunteer "Bigs", while sibling Alijuan (right) still waits

## Wait Wait, Don't Tell Me...

8-year-old Alijuan Stanton loves to play basketball like Steph Curry, and he loves to run. He is into animals and wants to be a biologist when he grows up. But even still, he doesn't go outside much.

"I just stay in the house and watch TV," Alijuan said.

Getting more active is one reason Alijuan says he wants a Big Brother. Alijuan and his siblings – sister Mariah and brother Frank Jr.—are awesome kids. They've got a great maternal guardian at home. But they have endured some tough breaks as well. So their guardian, who operates a food truck, contacted Big Brothers Big Sisters to see about getting each child a volunteer mentor to have fun with, and to broaden their experiences.

(see *Wait Wait*, page 2)

### Our Mission:

We provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that *change their lives for the better, forever.*

### Our Vision:

All children achieve *success in life.*



**Big Brothers Big Sisters**  
of Johnson County

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## Farewell and Thank You, Graduates!

### Your BBBS Team

*Program Assistant:*  
**Dina Bishara**

*Program Manager,  
Mahaska County Satellite*  
**Robbyn Duchow**

*Community-Based  
Mentoring Specialist:*  
**Francisco Garcia**

*Community-Based  
Mentoring Specialist:*  
**Kristen Elting**

*School-Based  
Mentoring Specialist:*  
**Molly Gilroy**

*Secondary-School Based  
Mentoring Specialist:*  
**Jill Kromminga**

*Program Director:*  
**Chanel Meredith**

*Donor Support &  
Events Coordinator Intern*  
**McKenzie Musser**

*Community-Based  
Mentoring Specialist:*  
**Mindy Paulsen**

*Executive Director:*  
**Daleta Thurness**

*Donor Relations & Events  
Coordinator, Mahaska  
County Satellite:*  
**Alyssa Werries**

*Mentoring Specialist &  
Content Strategist:*  
**Tyson Wirth**



*Monica West (left) is moving to Colorado after serving BBBS of JC as an AmeriCorps Member for the past year. She has also served as President of the student organization Big Brothers Big Sisters at Iowa for 2 years, and as a Big Sister for 3.*  
*Tanner Smith (right) is beginning a Master's of Social Work program at the University of Iowa, after interning for BBBS this summer.*  
*Thank you both for all the time and energy you have invested to help our local children unlock their potential, and to strengthen and connect families and the community!*

### Wait Wait (continued from Page 1)

The good news is that middle child Frank Jr., and eldest child Mariah, just met the volunteers who are becoming their Big Brother and Big Sister, respectively. The bad news is, sibling Alijuan is still waiting, 3+ months after he and his guardian were interviewed.

Alijuan just completed 2nd grade at his Coralville elementary school, where he served on the student council. What does his council do?

"We make posters," Alijuan said. "Then the people who are not on student council, they bring money to the office and give it to them. Then we send it to the Children's Hospital."

BBBS: Wow! Can I say thank you? That is really important work you are doing... A lot of councils would be like, 'We want longer recess! We want better lunch food!'

"We do that too," Alijuan laughed. "We ask for more gooder lunch (sic). Because we always have hair in our lunch!"

He says that if they could pick just one super power, it would be to help people; old people, specifically.

"Like grandparents," Alijuan adds. "Because sometimes it's hard for them to get to places."

Alijuan is 1 of the 31 kids on Big Brothers Big Sisters' "waitlist"; each is waiting for a volunteer mentor to hang out with 2-4 times/month. Mariah looks forward to crafting, biking, and enjoying time in parks with her future Big Sister. Frank Jr. is eager to play board games and get active outside. Alijuan hopes to play basketball with his future Big. Nobody loves waiting, but there is reason for Alijuan to hope that help may be coming.

In 2017, the Community-Based waitlist was bursting full, with nearly 100 kids waiting to be matched with a volunteer mentor for the 1st time.





Then Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County hired Mindy Paulsen (left) and Kristen Elting (right) as Community-Based Mentoring Specialists. Paulsen, a former educator and elementary school principal, and Elting, previously an intern with BBBS of JC, got to work. They interviewed and oriented dozens of volunteers over the next several months, coordinated 3+ reference checks for each applicant, and conducted background checks. The pair analyzed factors that lead to great Big-Little matches: shared interests, personalities, geographical preferences, and others. They made matches on paper, then facilitated a Match Meeting for each pairing; that's where the family, youth, and volunteer mentor all meet to prepare the Big-Little match for success and celebrate a new chapter beginning. Finally, Paulsen and Elting provided, and continue to provide, regular high-quality support for each match on a regular basis, talking with and offering individualized support to each youth, parent/guardian, and mentor.

In just 1 year, the pair reduced the number of youth on the waitlist number by 70%, from around 100 to just 31. Program Director Chanel Meredith has worked at BBBS of JC for 16 years, and calls their impact nothing short of remarkable.

"The waitlist is smaller than it's ever been," Meredith said. "Kristen and Mindy have done such a commendable job. It's amazing. They are both unbelievable team players."

Still, as kids like Alijuan can attest, work remains. New volunteers are needed to mentor great kids like these, especially in school-based programs in North Liberty, Iowa City, Coralville, and Solon, where BBBS and 4-H are launching a new middle school afterschool club. The good news is that anyone can help. Will you?

**Please help a child facing adversity!**

**Find a way that is right for you:**

- Apply to become a mentor
- Encourage a dependable adult to apply
- Become a donor
- Become a sponsor
- Come to a fundraising event, such as Gridiron Bash, and/or purchase raffle tickets (see details at right)

**Learn about all options at [www.bbbsjc.org](http://www.bbbsjc.org). THANK YOU!!!**

## Ultimate Sports Package



**YOUR CHOICE:**  
GOLFING @ PEBBLE  
BEACH, CUBS @  
WRIGLEY, ESPY  
AWARDS, OR SELECT  
FROM MLB, NBA, NFL,  
NHL OR PGA GOLF

**\$100 EACH FOR A 1 IN  
100 CHANCE**

MORE DETAILED INFORMATION CAN  
BE FOUND AT:  
[HTTPS://WWW.BBBSJC.ORG/EVENTS/  
GRIDIRON-BASH/](https://www.bbbsjc.org/events/gridiron-bash/)

PROCEEDS BENEFIT 1:1 MENTORING

**HURRY  
For Your  
Chance to  
Win!**

Only 100 tickets available

Need not be present to win, drawing  
will occur October 27, 2018 during Big  
Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson  
County Gridiron Bash

[www.bbbsjc.org/events/gridiron-bash/](http://www.bbbsjc.org/events/gridiron-bash/)



## Gridiron Bash

IOWA CITY, IOWA

PURCHASE TICKETS:  
[WWW.BBBSJC.ORG](http://WWW.BBBSJC.ORG)

General Admission \$65

(\$60 if before 8/31/18)

VIP \$100 (limit 30)

IOWA AGAINST  
PENN STATE

Oct. 27, 2018/TBD

Kinnick Stadium Press Box

THIS IS AN AWAY GAME

GENERAL ADMISSION TICKET PRICE INCLUDES:  
TAILGATE BUFFET, DOMESTIC BEER, HOUSE WINE AND SODA  
INCLUDED. CASH BAR AVAILABLE.

VIP TICKET INCLUDES ALL OF THE ABOVE AND:  
PREFERRED SEATING, GIFT, PRE-GAME TOUR OF PINK VISITORS  
LOCKER ROOM, VIDEO CONTROL CENTER, PRESIDENTS BOX, NEW  
NORTH END ZONE AND ON-FIELD TURF

SILENT AUCTION AND 50/50 RAFFLE

PROCEEDS SUPPORT 1:1 MENTORING

Touchdown Sponsor

Field Goal Sponsors

First Down Sponsors  
The Mighty 1630 - KCJJ

WELLS  
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LOCALS  
LOVE US

## Behind The Scenes

The following volunteer Board Members help local kids facing adversity through their time, talents, relationships, advocacy, and more.

A **BIG** Thank You to our 2018 Board Members!!!

**H. Scott Asay**, U of I Tippie College of Business

**Byson Croy**  
Hills Bank and Trust

**Robbie Deckard**, UICCU

**Guy Falsetti**, U of I Information Technology

**Michelle Gehrke**, US Bank Planning Chair

**Aaron Helling**, Wells Fargo Chair

**Amy Hospodarsky**,  
MidWestOne Bank Secretary

**Tina McCoy Hearn**, ACT Vice-Chair

**Susie Poulton**, Iowa City Community School District Program Chair

**Angela Street**, Pearson Marketing Chair

**Danny Stafford**,  
LattaHarris, LLP Treasurer & Finance Chair

**Laurie Walters**, Oral B

**Karissa Wikert**,  
Hills Bank and Trust

## Summer 2018 Partner of Impact: Johnson County Board of Supervisors!

*Since at least 1984, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors has helped Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County to reach more kids, more families, and make a much larger impact on the communities we serve. We sat down with 1 of the 5 Supervisors, Rod Sullivan, to better understand the Board's goals, and how our partnership has grown over the past 3+ decades. Here are a few highlights:*

### **BBBS: What is the Board of Supervisors and what do they do?**

Rod Sullivan: We are the county government. Every county function, whether it's county roads, or parks, or health and human services, or the auditor's office, recorder, treasurer, sheriff, county attorney, sheriff, county attorney, all that stuff; county government, that's what we do.

### **BBBS: The Board's Mission is "To enhance the quality of life for people of Johnson County by providing exceptional public services in a collaborative, responsive, and fiscally accountable manner. What does that look like in your mind?**

RS: Everything in that mission statement is up to each individual to define. Fiscally responsi-



*Rod Sullivan (above) is 1 of 5 officials elected to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors. Sullivan has been a supervisor since 2004, and has been active member of Bowl For Kids' Sake (BFKS) since 2003. BFKS is the largest annual fundraiser for BBBS, funding 1 out of every 3 Big-Little matches we make.*

ble to 1 person is not necessarily fiscally responsible to the next. But I've been doing this a while now and we've done our best to try and provide services for the broadest majority of people, knowing that not everybody uses everything. And where we can, trying definitely to help folks who are more vulnerable because obviously those are the folks who need a little more help than some of the others.

### **BBBS: Some of those folks you help are through funding to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County. How has that evolved?**

RS: We've always been part of what's called a joint funding process which is the cities of Iowa City and Coralville and Johnson County and United Way where we ask those agencies to fill out some basic forms and we take that data and decide how we want to allocate our money.

In addition to that, several years ago the county had a federal grant for juvenile justice. Big Brothers Big Sisters was a big player in that. Unfortunately the federal money went away but the county was so happy with the results they kept using the money that was the local match to



still fund the agencies to do some of the same things. That federal match went away in the late 1990s or something and we're still funding juvenile justice today. Some of those programs that get funded include Big Brothers Big Sisters.

### BBBS: Why?

A lot of the data that was collected showed that families and kids who had access to a Big; those kids had a lower rate of getting in the juvenile court system. So it just clearly worked. So the county wanted to continue to fund something that seemed like it worked.

### BBBS: You and your wife have fostered over 50 children. You obviously have a passion for helping youth. Where did that come from?

RS: Well that's a good question... I have always been one of those people who rooted for the underdog a little bit. When I first got introduced to Big Brothers Big Sisters I was working as a social worker in the home, and we were doing in-home work with families. Back when there was better funding from the Department of Human Services, they didn't

take kids straight into foster care, they would often intervene with services, like in-home services. And I was one of the people who provided in-home services. And in some of these families, it was clear there was a Big Brother or a Big Sister who was making a really big difference, and you could see it in the kids. You could see how much better Wednesdays were, because Wednesdays were the days they were with their Big, you know? That was my intro to Big Brothers Big Sisters and I was impressed right from the beginning. The more I've learned over the years, the more I've continued to be impressed.

Thank you guys. Again we've got that mission statement of trying to make this a better place to live for everybody and we couldn't do that by ourselves, we have to have partners. And certainly one of the partner agencies is Big Brothers Big Sisters.



*Little Sister Breelin and Big Sister Kathy explored wetlands together at Kent Park Night, a 4-H/BBBS Club event. Because the Board of Supervisors and partners like you support BBBS, more children facing adversity can participate in free and fun events that expand their horizons and create special memories for a child and his/her mentor. Find out more at [www.bbbsjc.org](http://www.bbbsjc.org)!*

***"You could see how much better Wednesdays were, because Wednesdays were the days they were with their Big."***

### Fast Facts: The Board of Supervisors

**Who:** Janelle Rettig, Kurt M. Friese, Mike Carberry, Rod Sullivan, Lisa Green-Douglass.

**Meet Where:** Boardroom on the second floor of the County Administration Building, 913 South Dubuque Street, Iowa City .

**Meet When:** Generally on Thursdays at 9 am; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month is at 5:30 pm. Public welcome, but check calendar beforehand in case of changes. Meetings broadcast live and archived online.

### August/September Big-Little Outing Ideas:

- ◇ **Get a back-to-school haircut together!** La James Beauty School in Iowa City now offers Bigs & Littles \$6.99 haircuts, and/or \$8.99 styles when coming in together with the BBBS identification card. Appointments encouraged.
- ◇ **Go to a baseball game!** For the Cedar Rapids Kernels, all kids 12 and under eat free on home Sundays (hot dog, popcorn and beverage), can play catch in the outfield, run the bases, enjoy face painting and balloon artistry.
- ◇ **I Scream, You Scream, We All... Politely Say 'Thank you' for Ice Cream!** Show your BBBS identification card when out together at Cold Stone (10% discount, both locations) or Dairy Queen (25% off, North Liberty)
- ◇ **Moon Walk and Star Party,** Saturday Sept. 22nd, Penn Meadow Park, North Liberty. Free! Hosted by Take A Kid Outdoors. Follow TAKO on Facebook for details.

BBBS of JC is a United Way sponsored agency. Visit [www.unitedwayjwc.org](http://www.unitedwayjwc.org) to become a supporter. Or support local youth directly through [www.bbbsjc.org](http://www.bbbsjc.org).

### About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County

For more than 100 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters has allied with families, volunteers, and community partners to help children facing adversity realize:

- Higher aspirations
- Greater confidence
- Better relationships
  - Avoidance of risky behaviors
- Educational success
- And of course... a whole lot of fun!

Discover the impact at:  
[www.bbbsjc.org/impact](http://www.bbbsjc.org/impact)

### Get Connected!

Discover free outing ideas, ask a question, or share a fun Big-Little picture (check 1st with parent/guardian), on:

- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Twitter](#)  
(@BBBSmentoring)
- [YouTube](#)

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## Substance Abuse Prevention: Words Matter

By Jill Kromminga, Secondary School Based Specialist

This section of our newsletter is devoted to providing substance abuse/misuse information. This month we take a quick look at the word "Addict". The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) website calls this "a person with a substance use disorder" or "someone who's addicted to drugs".

Why? Some words like "drug abuser" or "addict" (or "pothead" or "alcoholic") make it sound like that is who/what this person IS and doesn't account for how we are all complete and complex people with all different likes/dislikes, dreams, stresses and circumstances.

A quote from the NIDA for teens website: Words like "addict" are misleading in another way, too. We know that [addiction is a disorder](#) that [happens in the brain](#). The first time a person takes a drug, it's their choice—but what happens in their body and brain after that may be [less and less under their control](#). Some people are simply [more likely than others](#) to [develop a drug problem](#).

Why is this important to keep in mind? When we separate people from their substance abuse disorder it can help reduce the shame someone might feel and make it easier for them to try to get help.

*Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County has been the grateful participant/recipient of a grant from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). This grant primarily funds our Secondary School Based Mentoring Program; our in-school mentoring program for Junior High and early high school students. Drug abuse/misuse prevention is one of the goals of this grant.*



## New: Connect and Engage on LinkedIn & YouTube!

Our mission of changing children's lives for the better, forever, through strong and enduring, professionally supported 1-to-1 mentoring relationships, is too important to sit on the status quo. That's why Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County is now on LinkedIn and YouTube! Please like/subscribe/follow us via any and all of the platforms on the left.



Then, most importantly—engage! We want to know what YOU want to see and read about, what questions you have about mentoring, and to share inspiration and ideas. Plus, each time you like or comment on a post/Tweet/video you help us reach more people in the

community with the potential to become volunteers, donors, or sponsors to help even more kids facing adversity to reach their full potential.

So if you are active online; engage with us!

THANK YOU!!

