



BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF ORANGE COUNTY NAMES O.C. “BIGS OF THE YEAR” DURING NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

Jen Necir of Irvine and Lawrence Wozniak of Redondo Beach are Recognized for Their Dedication to Their “Littles” Through BBBSOC Youth Mentorships

Tustin, Calif. (January 27, 2014) – For their unwavering dedication to making a positive, long-lasting impact on their “Littles” through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County’s mentorship programs, “Big” Jen Necir was named “Big Sister of the Year” and “Big” Lawrence Wozniak was named “Big Brother of the Year” during National Mentoring Month in January, which focuses on the need for mentors and how communities can work together to increase the number of mentors to assure positive outcomes for youth.

Irvine resident and “Big Sister of the Year” Necir has been matched with her “Little,” Abbie, 11, for over two years and during that time Abbie has matured, improved her grades in school, and has come out of her shell. Having been raised by her grandparents in the Philippines, Necir understands the importance positive role models make in the life of a child and has always been passionate about helping youth. Necir encourages Abbie to do well in school and that she can become anything she dreams. They have experienced many things together from theme parks, new foods, a karate intro class, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County match events, and Bring Your Little to Work Day in 2012, where Necir is a financial analyst. Both Necir and Abbie lost their fathers at a young age and Necir has been able to provide comfort and understanding to Abbie surrounding this hardship. Says Abbie of Necir, “Jen has really helped me with difficult things in my life. She has taught me to think of the good things in my life. She always knows what to say to make me feel better.”

“Big Brother of the Year” Wozniak, of **Redondo Beach**, has shown tremendous dedication to his “Little” Geoffrey, 17, having been matched for over eight years. Geoffrey has always been encouraged by Wozniak to be the best he can be, and has become more social, very involved in sports, including playing football for three years after being introduced to the sport by Wozniak, and has does well in school since his mentorship with Wozniak began. With the help of his “Big,” Geoffrey exceeded in school, will be graduating in June 2014 and will go on to attend Golden West College. Inspired by Wozniak’s career as a special agent for ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, & Explosives), Geoffrey is looking into majoring in criminal justice, and Wozniak offered to help his “Little” choose the right classes.

A humanitarian for the people, Wozniak has also taught Geoffrey to help others in need, including volunteering together at food banks. Wozniak takes his philanthropy around the world, having gone

to Guatemala and Nicaragua to help build homes for families in need. Wozniak shared pictures of the homes he helped to build with Geoffrey and proposed to Geoffrey that possibly in the future they can take a trip together to help build homes for families in need. Geoffrey was so moved that he posted pictures in his room, and looks forward to the day that he can help build homes for families in need too.

Although Geoffrey will turn 18 this year and his match program will officially end, the two will continue their friendship. Geoffrey's mom says of the program, "I think this has been the best thing I could have ever done for my son."

"We are thrilled to honor Jen and Larry as our 2014 Bigs of the Year. Each of their compassion, leadership and dedication to their Little is extraordinary. They have truly changed the life of their Little for the better, forever, which is the mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County," says Melissa Beck, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County.

A nonprofit organization that helps youth to realize their potential and build their futures, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County provides over 2,000 children facing adversity with professionally supported one-to-one mentoring relationships to change their lives for the better. Youth ("Littles") are matched with volunteer mentors ("Bigs") to develop positive relationships that have a direct and lasting effect on their lives. In 2012, 100% of "Littles" graduated high school on time, and 87% went on to college.

For more information on Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and its programs, visit www.BigBroOC.org.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County

For more than 100 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters has operated under the belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life. Most children served by Big Brothers Big Sisters live in single-parent and low-income families, or households where a parent is incarcerated. As the nation's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, Big Brothers Big Sisters makes meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers ("Bigs") and children ("Littles"). Providing a system of ongoing evaluation and support, Big Brothers Big Sisters is proven by independent studies to help families by improving the odds that "Littles" will perform better in school and avoid violence and illegal activities, and have stronger relationships with their parents and others. Headquartered in Philadelphia with a network of nearly 400 agencies across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves a quarter million children annually. In 2013, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County served over 2,200 children. For more information, visit <http://www.bigbrooc.org/>.

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