



**MENTORING YOUTH.  
CHANGING FUTURES.**

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**Big Brothers Big Sisters Names 2017 Big of the Year Winners**  
*National Mentoring Month celebration continues with recognition  
of top volunteers on Thank Your Mentor Day*

**SANTA ANA, Calif. (Jan 19, 2017)** – [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire](#), a one-to-one youth mentoring organization, today announces its 2017 Big of the Year award recipients. Jessica Romley and Tom Caporale were selected for making a significant impact on the life of a child through one-to-one mentorship and demonstrating excellence as an advocate of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

The top honors are bestowed annually in January on Thank Your Mentor Day, part of the longstanding National Mentoring Month public awareness campaign.

**Romley**, a resident of Orange, began volunteering with Big Brothers Big Sisters in 2010 as a mentor to Little Sister Alejandra. Her profound impact began just six months after being matched, when she provided emotional support and guidance during a family transition that resulted in Romley helping to reunite Alejandra with her father.

"Being a mentor has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life," Romley says. "Alejandra's positive outlook and perseverance even in the most difficult circumstances inspire me every day—I learn as much from her as I hope she learns from me. We will be sisters forever."

Since becoming involved with the nonprofit, Romley has also participated in volunteer recruitment efforts through video appearances and public speaking opportunities. In 2013, she joined the agency in a professional capacity as director of programs. She has continued her mentorship of Alejandra and last fall, the now 15-year-old followed in Romley's footsteps and became a High School Bigs mentor at Beswick Elementary School in Tustin.

**Caporale**, a resident of Chino, began mentoring 7-year-old Noah in July 2006. Growing up with a single mother and five sisters, Noah struggled as the only male in the household. Caporale stepped in to be a positive male influence and led by example to show Noah the importance of treating all women with respect. As a mentor, Caporale has motivated and supported Noah in all facets of his life, including attending band performances and basketball games; helping him transition into public school; and teaching him how to drive.

"I've been matched with Noah over 10 and a half years now; we see each other every other week," Caporale says. "I've been asked if I get paid to be a Big Brother and the honest answer is yes—every time Noah laughs, giggles or smiles, that's how I get paid."

Other Big of the Year finalists include:

- Luisa Acosta
- Steve Blanc
- Jim Curry
- Mohammad Jaffrey
- Carrie Koss
- Alexa McCarthy
- Steve Meiseinheimer
- Paulina Tedford

Run by the national headquarters of Big Brothers Big Sisters, Big of the Year is an annual recognition program that honors two local volunteers from each of the 300-plus agencies across the nation. Romley and Caporale will advance to vie for the California title, with state winners announced in early spring.

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters one-to-one youth mentoring programs, visit [ocbigs.org](http://ocbigs.org).

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#### **About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire**

Big Brothers Big Sisters believes that with the support of a caring mentor, every child has the ability to achieve his or her full potential. It is the nation's largest donor- and volunteer-supported mentoring organization, serving a quarter-million children annually. Based in Santa Ana, Calif., the Orange County agency was incorporated in 1958 and works as a local extension of the national effort to make professionally supported, one-to-one matches between mentors ("Bigs") and children ("Littles") facing adversity. Together with the Inland Empire agency, which opened its doors in 2013, the local organization annually serves more than 3,000 children through programs that improve the odds of youth performing better in school and avoiding violence and illegal activities. For more information visit [ocbigs.org](http://ocbigs.org) or follow Big Brothers Big Sisters on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

#### **About National Mentoring Month**

Launched in 2002 by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, National Mentoring Month focuses national attention on the need for mentors, as well as how each of us—individuals, businesses, government agencies, schools, faith communities and nonprofits—can work together to increase the number of mentors to help ensure positive outcomes for our young people. The campaign celebrates mentoring and the positive effect it can have on young lives. Learn more at [mentoring.org](http://mentoring.org).