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O.C. Volunteer Wins 2017 State Title for Big Brothers Big Sisters Big of the Year Competition

Volunteer mentor Jessica Romley will advance to the national judging panel

SANTA ANA, Calif. (Feb. 22, 2017) – Youth mentoring nonprofit [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire](#) today announces the selection of local volunteer Jessica Romley as the 2017 California Big of the Year, an award presented jointly by the 15 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies across the state. She is recognized for going above and beyond in helping Little Sister Alejandra, 15, achieve academic and personal success while overcoming challenging situations at home.

Romley, who has volunteered with the nonprofit since 2010, is one of two California winners advancing to the final round of the national competition.

“Over the last seven years, Jessica has demonstrated how developing a one-to-one relationship with a child can make a life-changing difference,” says Melissa Beck, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire. “We could not be more proud that her commitment to Alejandra is being honored by the state association. She is an incredible example of how our 3,300 volunteers are using mentoring to help our local youth achieve their full potential.”

A resident of Orange, Romley was selected earlier this year as the Big Sister of the Year for the Orange County and Inland Empire agency. After helping reunite the then-9-year-old with her father during the first year of their match, she continued to encourage Alejandra to pursue excellence in school and extracurricular activities. Thanks to Romley’s support as a role model, Alejandra set high goals for her future and is now an Advanced Placement student, holds a leadership role on the colorguard team and volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters as a teen mentor in the High School Bigs program.

“Being a mentor to Alejandra has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life,” Romley says. “I have always encouraged her to use her passions and strengths to become a better person and do good for others, but never realized how much I could learn from her along the way. She has taught me more about perseverance, positivity and strength than anyone else I’ve ever known.”

Winners of the national Big of the Year award will be announced in June at the annual Big Brothers Big Sisters conference in San Diego.

For more information about the Big Brothers Big Sisters one-to-one youth mentoring program, visit 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 3,300 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 or follow Big Brothers Big Sisters on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).