



PARENT NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BBBS TEAM

Happy Fall, Parents and Guardians!

This school year begins with fresh energy and a clear direction for how we serve youth and families here at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County and the Inland Empire. Over the past several months, our agency has been streamlining the work we do across **Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties** into one, unified approach. This means that now more than ever, you can count on the same support, quality, and connection, regardless of where you live, knowing **you and your family are a valued part of our village**.

As part of this unified approach, we've also created a roadmap for the future, also referred to as our **Strategic Plan**. This guide was shaped by the voices of parents, volunteers, youth, staff, and community partners alike who all came together in listening sessions to share their mentorship experiences and ideas. From those conversations came a clear priority: **deepen our impact with families**. This means creating more ways for you to feel connected and equipped with resources that truly make a difference for your children.

Working together in this way helps us **plan more thoughtfully, discover new possibilities, and find creative ways to support you** and your children in the months ahead. As the school year unfolds, we know there will be moments of joy and moments of challenge. Through it all, our commitment is to walk alongside you, listen to your needs, and keep building the connections and opportunities that help your children thrive.

Together, we are creating a community where every child feels supported and every family knows they are not alone. Here's to a year of working side by side to inspire growth and build the brightest futures for our young people.



Jessica González

Director of Program Support Services

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To stay up on the latest news and updates for parents and guardians, visit ocbigs.org/parent-news



**COLLEGE & CAREER****WRITE YOUR WAY IN:
COLLEGE ESSAY WORKSHOP**

Saturday, October 4 | 10 AM - 12 PM
BBBS Office, Santa Ana

Is your child applying to college this year?
Join us for support on college essays,
especially for private schools and UCs.

Writing these essays can be tough, but we're
here to help make the process smoother!

[**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**](#)**PARENT TRAINING****BETTER TOGETHER: SUPPORTING
CHILDREN THROUGH BULLYING**

Saturday, October 25 | 10 AM - 12 PM
BBBS Office, Santa Ana

School is back, and we want every child to
feel safe and supported. In this workshop,
parents will learn how to recognize the
signs of bullying, what steps to take,
and how to create a positive and caring
environment at home and at school.

[**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**](#)**WELCOME BACK, FOOD DISTRIBUTION AT BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS!**

We're so excited to share that our food distribution program is back and better
than ever—now called **TEFAP Food Distribution!** Our families can now register
to receive both fresh and pantry foods **every single month.**

Our first event back was a huge success thanks to our incredible volunteers and
staff. Families left with full bags, happy hearts, and gratitude for the support.
We're thrilled to continue offering this resource and can't wait to see you at the
next distribution!

NEXT EVENT: SEPTEMBER 25

Register now at ocbigs.org/food

[**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**](#)

HOLIDAY GIFT DRIVE 2025

Sunday, December 14 | 10 AM - 12:30 PM
BBBS Office, Santa Ana

That special time of year is just around the corner, which means **nominations are now open** for our Annual Holiday Gift Drive! We believe every child deserves to feel the joy of the holidays, and this event helps bring that magic to life for our families.

Participation is first-come, first-served, and parents/guardians must be present on December 14 to receive gifts. We look forward to celebrating the season together and spreading holiday cheer with our BBBS community!

[CLICK HERE TO NOMINATE A CHILD](#)



If you're unable to register for the BBBS Holiday Gift Drive, please call or text our Family Resource Specialist, Marissa Gonzalez, at (714) 619-7020 to join a waitlist for similar holiday events hosted by our community partners, like Families Together of OC. We'll reach out as soon as we hear of other opportunities, working to help connect your family with holiday experiences whenever possible.



BBBS EVENT SPOTLIGHT: BACK-TO-SCHOOL DISTRIBUTION & RESOURCE FAIR

It was a beautiful day of smiles, support, and community at our **Back-to-School Distribution and Resource Fair** back in August—the perfect way to kick off a new school year together!

We had **over 85 families** join us, nine community resource partners came ready to share helpful information, and every student left with a free backpack filled with school supplies. Thanks to our village of support, **our mentees are ready to take on the year with confidence.**

FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAM PARENTS

MEET OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBERS



AMANDA GREEN

Sr. Regional Director of
Community Engagement

Who inspires you and why?

Michelle Obama! After I listened to her audiobook "Becoming", I was inspired to serve, be kind to others, and strive to be the best version of myself.



ANDREA LUCERO

Enrollment &
Match Specialist

What are some of your goals as an EMS?

Some of my goals are to create an emotionally safe space, engage in healthy communication, and offer praise for our youth and families.



ELIZABETH FLORES PEÑA

Enrollment &
Match Specialist

What brought you to Big Brothers Big Sisters?

As a mother myself, I value any organization that helps families that might need the extra resources and support. Being a parent in this society can be difficult, but with more resources, the easier parenting can be for us all!



SURVEY & CONTACT INFO REMINDERS



Please keep an eye out for messages from your Enrollment & Match Specialist (EMS) with survey links. Your feedback throughout the year is incredibly important, as it helps us strengthen the program and support the needs of our mentees and mentors better. **You may also be eligible for a gift card after completing your survey,** so be sure to ask your EMS for details!

With a brand-new school year upon us, **your EMS will also be reaching out to make sure we have the most up-to-date information,** such as your child's current grade, school name, and your mailing address. You can expect these quick check-in questions during your next match call, as they help us stay connected and provide the best possible support for your match. If you've already updated this information with us in the last couple of weeks, thank you so much for keeping us in the loop—we truly appreciate your partnership!

FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIGS PARENTS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2025–2026 school year! I hope you and your family had a safe and joyful summer. As we prepare to launch another incredible year of mentorship through our High School Bigs Program, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your continued partnership and trust in Big Brothers Big Sisters.

The heart of our work lies in the power of connection—between Bigs and Littles, families, staff, schools and communities. Your child is a vital part of that, and we're excited to support them every step of the way. Whether your child is returning or joining us for the first time, we are committed to ensuring a safe, positive, and growth-centered experience for all.

We know that your involvement plays a crucial role in your child's success. **Our Program Specialists will be reaching out to you in the coming weeks with important site details, match updates, and official start dates.** Please don't hesitate to connect with them if you have questions, need support, or have any changes in your contact information.

Together, we can make this school year one of meaningful relationships and memorable moments for your child. Thank you for allowing us to walk alongside your family in this journey.



Nadia Sanchez

High School Bigs Program Manager

nsanchez@ocbigs.org



HIGH SCHOOL BIGS SUMMER CELEBRATION RECAP

In July we hosted our annual **High School Bigs Summer Celebration** at the Santa Ana Zoo—and what a day it was! **600 Bigs and Littles** gathered for a fun-filled event full of games, animal encounters, and reconnection after time apart. It was incredible to see so many matches picking up right where they left off and creating new memories together. Thank you to every family who made it possible for their child to attend; we're so grateful for your support. **Watch our video to relive all the laughs and special moments!**

[WATCH VIDEO RECAP](#)



FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIGS PARENTS



PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS & REMINDERS

To help your student have the best possible experience this year, please review the following reminders:

- **Attendance Matters:** Weekly attendance is essential for your child to build trust and get the most out of their match.
- **No Contact Outside of Site:** All communication between Bigs and Littles will take place at program sites only. No outside communication is permitted.
- **Update Your Info:** Moved or changed your phone number? Let your Program Specialist (PS) know ASAP to stay connected!
- **We're Here to Help:** If your family needs help getting connected to basic necessities, like food, housing, mental health services, and more, please don't hesitate to reach out to your PS who can connect you to our Program Support Services team.



PERSONAL SAFETY RULES

At BBBS, safety is our number one priority. Here are some of the site rules your child must follow:

- **Respectful Behavior:** Students are expected to show respect to their Bigs, peers, Program Specialist, and the material at all times.
- **No Exchange of Contact Info:** For the safety of all participants, students are strictly prohibited from exchanging personal contact info with their Big, such as phone numbers or social media profiles.
- Additionally, **meeting outside of the supervised mentoring sessions is NOT permitted.**



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Throughout the year, your child and their Big will work on a Youth Outcome Development Plan (YODP) to help achieve their goals. Our proven curriculum focuses on five key goals:

- Increasing confidence
- Future planning and exploration
- Building social skills
- Creating stronger relationships
- Learning self-regulation



FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIG PARENTS

STARTING THE YEAR ON THE RIGHT FOOT

As your child gets ready to return to mentoring, take a moment to **ask how they're feeling about reconnecting with their Big—or meeting a new one.** Whether they're continuing a strong relationship or starting fresh, your encouragement can help set a positive tone.

Remind them to be open, kind, and consistent, and to share any thoughts or concerns with their Program Specialist. Your support at home helps your child feel confident and ready to make the most of their mentoring experience this year!

FOR WORKPLACE MENTORING PARENTS

Hello, Parents and Guardians!

My name is Renee Valencia, I am the Workplace Mentoring Program Specialist for Loara High School x Disneyland Resort, and I am so excited to welcome you and your students back for the 2025-2026 school year!

Our program will kick off on September 17, and we have a great year planned out. We've collaborated with Disneyland Resort to offer an array of interactive activities and lessons as students connect with their mentors, from a scavenger hunt at Disneyland to working sessions to guide discussions about postsecondary education and potential career paths.



Here are a few important reminders for families as we start off our year:

- All sessions will be hosted at Disneyland Resort's corporate office from 3:30 PM - 5 PM.
- Bus transportation will be provided from Loara High School to Disney and back.
- Check your email inbox to submit your student's Early Dismissal Permission Form (**Students need this permission slip in order to participate**). More program information will be emailed to you in the next couple of weeks
- Please make sure your contact information is up-to-date with your latest phone number, email, and mailing address. If you've moved since last year or need to change your info, please contact me directly.

I am looking forward to working with you and your student as we provide the space needed to support memorable relationships and experiences. Your support at home is crucial to your child's growth and success in the Workplace Mentoring Program, so please feel free to reach out with any questions you may have now or throughout the school year. Thank you!



Renee Valencia

Workplace Mentoring Program Specialist
rvalencia@ocbig.org



COMMUNITY RESOURCES & EVENTS



Anaheim Health Fair

The Anaheim Health Fair is offering a variety of free medical, dental, and vision services, along with screenings, vaccinations, and specialist consultations. Services include dental fillings and extractions, eye exams, flu shots, physicals, mammograms, and more—all provided by licensed healthcare professionals. Free parking is available, and services are offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Date & Time: Saturday, September 20, 8 AM - 4 PM

Location: Anaheim Convention Center
800 W. Katella Ave., Anaheim, CA

[View Flyer](#)

6th Annual Trunk or Treat

The Power of One Foundation invites families to their 6th Annual Trunk or Treat at IKEA Costa Mesa. This free, family-friendly Halloween event will feature decorated car trunks filled with candy, a costume contest, and interactive games and activities for all ages. Guests can enjoy plenty of sweet treats while celebrating in a safe and festive environment. Costumes are encouraged!

Dates: Saturday, October 25, 3 PM - 7 PM

Location: IKEA Costa Mesa
1475 S Coast Dr, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

[Click here to learn more](#)



Boo at the Zoo

Get ready for Halloween fun at BOO at the Zoo! This free event for Santa Ana residents (with RSVP) includes nighttime animal presentations, themed photo spots, and special goodies for kids. Families can enjoy a safe and festive evening at the zoo!

Dates & Times: October 18, 19, 25 & 26, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Location: Santa Ana Zoo
1801 E Chestnut Ave, Santa Ana, CA 92701

[Click here to learn more](#)



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