



Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Placement Description

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg-Rockingham County is a youth-services organization that pairs adult mentors in professionally guided, one-to-one matches with children facing adversity. As an affiliate of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the nation's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, the organization holds itself accountable for children in the program to achieve positive, measurable outcomes through research-based methods. Among other improvements, local evaluation data shows that children served progress academically, avoid delinquency, and experience increased self-confidence. BBBS matches children ages 5-14 with mentors. For more information visit the website at www.bbbshr.org

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Assist in enrolling and interviewing children applying for services
- Assist with follow up contact of
- Assist in all aspects of documentation process
- Assist in conducting monthly surveys and evaluation of match with youth and mentors
- Assist with annual fundraiser Bowl for Kid's Sake
- Assist with other agency fundraisers and recruitment events
- Gain an understanding of non-profits

Contact Information

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Read about students' experiences at this site below



Spring 2020 – Hallie Park

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Harrisonburg-Rockingham County (BBBSHR) was a very valuable experience for me as a college senior. The mission of BBBSHR is to “create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth”. They achieve their mission through community-based and site-based programs. Both of these programs are based off of BBBS’ national standards for their programs. This encompasses that a volunteer (Big) will mentor a child (Little). There is a lengthy process that both the Big and Little have to go through in order to be fully active in the programs. For the Big, they must go through multiple background checks in addition to multiple interviews in person and at their home. This ensures that they are a safe and reliable person for the Little to look up to. For the Little, while it may not be as intensive, they sit down with the Little and their guardian to learn as much about them so they can match them with the best Big. While they are meeting with the Little and their family, they discuss the two options for programs that was previously mentioned. The community-based program is when the Big and Little will meet and do activities out in the local community. Typically, these activities are ones that both the Big and Little have interest in and they are encouraged to be free activities. The pair can meet and play games, play at the park, or even bake at the Big’s home for typically an hour a week. In contrast, the site-based program is where the Big will travel to the Little’s school once a week. When they meet, they will typically spend lunch and recess together separate from the little’s classmates to ensure that a bond is made and continued between the two. Both of these programs are designed for the Big and Little to spend time together and make valuable connections that will hopefully improve the child’s life.

My experience, while it was cut short, was a valuable one. I learned a lot about a small nonprofit set up, and some of the behind the scenes that go to it. My main responsibility at BBBSHR was to enter and complete background checks for all of the volunteers. For this, I would receive all of the volunteers information; including name, social security number, license number, address, etc. All of this was imperative for me to have in order to complete the local, state, and national background checks in addition to child protective services check. These checks are all required by BBBS of America in order to make sure that the volunteer is safe for the child. I would receive this information and put it in their files. In addition to background checks, I also completed reference checks for the potential volunteers. This meant I was calling or emailing their references to get an understanding of the potential volunteer. Through this time, I learned the importance and value of confidentiality as well as the value of making sure children have a safe role model that they can look up to. Once I received all of this information, I would update their database with all of the information I received.

Another experience I gained while at BBBSHR was I was able to learn about outreach for a small nonprofit and how imperative it is toward their stability and growth. At my time at BBBSHR, I was able to attend the quarterly board meeting and see what that entails. I was able to learn about all of the different aspects that make up a board in addition to what typically is covered during this time. This was very informative and I learned a lot during that time as I helped with prepping materials for the meeting as well as attend the meeting itself. This was a



step towards helping them with outreach as I learned how they divide up their funds for the year and where it all comes from. I learned about grants and how important it is to a small nonprofit, in addition to small local donations through the community. After learning this, I was able to help with outreach for their main fundraising event Bowl for Kid's Sake. I helped by going to local businesses to give information about BBBSHR and their event. I would ask if they wanted to donate either money or discounts to their business and would help with following up with them if they said yes. This was important because gaining more awareness about the event brought more people and funds to the organization which is imperative for them to support their Big's and Littles.

My contribution project focused on childhood trauma. I chose this because though my initial training with BBBS of America, I learned that a lot of the population that they serve includes children who have experienced trauma. I thought that if they work with such a large population of children who experience trauma, then it is important for the staff and volunteers to understand and learn about the children they are working with. My main research was on the effects that trauma has on the child, both physically and psychologically. I collected an astounding amount of information about how trauma affects children long-term and through this I learned of the best ways to help children post-trauma. I learned that trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy is the most helpful for both the children and the parents who have experienced trauma. And if they receive the correct help, they have a greater chance of seeing their experience as transformative and gain post-traumatic growth. After my research, I created a presentation for the staff and volunteers at BBBSHR about childhood trauma and its effects. I stated how the child is likely to act after a traumatic event and what they can do to help that child. This PowerPoint can be used in a general presentation for others, or there is detail in the notes section so that individuals can read in-depth, the important details of each slide.

Overall, I really enjoyed my experience at BBBSHR. I was able to learn a lot about nonprofits and myself in general. I learned that in a setting like that it is really helpful to be proactive in your work and ask what you can do instead of sitting around waiting for someone to tell you. I found that there is always something that could be done, even if it was a small task, it would be helpful to the whole group. While this experience was short, it was very impactful and I believe that it truly will help me in my future endeavors.

Spring 2016 – Sydney Moon

Over the course of this past semester, I have worked at Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County (BBBSHR). They provide mentoring to the local community. Mentoring comes in the form of a strong and enduring, professionally supported, one-to-one relationships between children and adults that will change the lives of the children for the better. This mentoring pairing between a “Big” (mentor) and a “little” (mentee) is called a “match” in BBBS. They have two programs for their matches – Community-based and School-based. Community-based program is when the Big and Little go on adventures together outside of the Little's school and home. And the School-based is when the Big meets the Little at the Little's



school for lunch, to play games, etc. BBBSHR is very research oriented, and has collected data over the years on the successes of their matches and the impact it has on the Littles. Research has shown that matches do impact the Littles in a positive way for the better.

Some opportunities at the BBBSHR site that I was able to experience included, but were not limited to, BBBS training, shadowing and informally interviewing staff members, handling and organizing data, and helping to plan and implement BBBSHR's annual signature fundraising event, Bowl For Kids' Sake. I was able to experience the daily work requirements of my supervisor (data entry and organization), as well as the planning and implementation of a successful non-profit fundraiser that only occurs annually.

BBBSHR required me to take 8+ engaging online training courses that they provided. The training courses included information about how BBBS functioned, the different job positions and descriptions, the process of how to start and how to end a match, their main computer program AIM, child/youth development, and child safety. The training provided an opportunity to gain more knowledge and understanding of the organization, its employees and services, the people they serve, and the rules and policies of the organization. By the time I finished all of the required training, I was able to fully engage with the staff about their jobs and any person who asked about BBBSHR's mission, vision, goals, and services. BBBSHR is extremely good at training their staff and employees. After I experienced the training, I felt very confident about my understanding of BBBSHR.

Some things that were also required of me were shadowing and informally interviewing almost all of the staff members at BBBSHR. It was not enough that I know the information - I also needed to engage the staff members one-on-one about their jobs and experiences. I shadowed some Match Support Specialists into the local Elementary and Middle Schools to learn how they interacted with Littles face-to-face. I also experienced the orientation and first Match meeting between a Little and a Big. And I interviewed (at the BBBSHR office) almost every staff member, participating in a lively discussion of how they came to BBBSHR, what they did on a daily basis, and what they enjoyed about their jobs. The impact of these shadowing and interviews was a deeper understanding of not just the jobs at BBBSHR, but also the people and the unique situations they experience at their jobs (and how they handle those situations).

Another part of my experience was the handling and organization of data. My supervisor, Lindsey Douglas, is the Resource Development Director. She has a big role to play in the relationship-building piece of BBBSHR's partnerships, as well as the organization and data entry of resources and partnerships. For instance, she writes grants for BBBSHR. I occasionally would research a particular grant donor per her request. I would also organize emails, send emails, call people, organize donor information, and organize Bowl For Kids' Sake fundraiser information and data into the appropriate online applications and excel sheets. I learned a lot about the importance of building relationships, organizing and analyzing data, and keeping my supervisor up-to-date with everything that I organized and submitted.



And finally, I helped to plan and implement Bowl For Kids' Sake 2016, which is BBBSHR's annual signature fundraising event. I assisted in organizing the teams onto a board with the times and lane numbers of the bowling alley. Throughout the semester, I submitted 25+ teams into the Bowl For Kids' Sake website, as well as added many team members into already created teams. I used Kintera, a web program to help businesses meet their specific business and technological needs, to edit the teams at later dates. I also, with the assistance of another BBBSHR intern, typed in all the teams' names and businesses into their designated lane assignments on an excel spreadsheet. At the Bowl For Kids' Sake fundraising event, I was a part of the registration for teams coming in to bowl. Throughout this experience, I learned how to organize, plan, and implement a successful non-profit fundraiser.

Some advantages of the BBBSHR site include, but are not limited to, working with a professional non-profit organization that provides the Harrisonburg community's children with positive mentoring opportunities (thus, I was able to give back to the community), working alongside dedicated and passionate staff members, completing thorough training which resulted in a well-rounded understanding of the organization, achieving driven results, developing personal professionalism, interacting and thriving in the unique organizational culture that is BBBSHR, creating deliverables for an actual organization with a current area of development, and helping to organize, plan, and implement a successful signature fundraising event that has a positive impact on the community.

One of my long-term goals is to protect and benefit my country by helping its organizations to lead and act the best that they possibly can in the professional world. Working in a non-profit organization that provides professional, positive, and enduring opportunities and experiences to children facing adversity ties into my long-term goals. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County provided an opportunity for me to assist them in serving the children of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham community. I was able to give back to my community, as well as support an organization that is passionate about their mission to serve the community. I am excited to start my professional career and use the knowledge, skills, and abilities that I have learned at BBBSHR in order to benefit both my organization and my community!

Something to note about this site: BBBSHR worked for me because I am very interested in learning about the people, organization, and the relationship between the two. I am going to be hired as a Human Resource Development (HRD) professional at my future job (I have a job after I graduate). So therefore, I sought to learn about the data, the organization, and the people to the best of my ability from an *HRD professional perspective*. If, as a psychology major in Field Placement, you are very interested in clinical work, then BBBSHR does not offer what you seek from an experience standpoint. However, if you are interested in organizations, people, and the relationship between the two, BBBSHR provides lots of wonderful opportunities to experience and see those relationships at work!