



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado Elevates Youth Voices and Expands Programs with the Acquisition of STARS Peer-to-Peer Programming

Denver, CO, April 12, 2022 – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado (BBBSC) is excited to announce its intended acquisition of the STARS peer-to-peer mentoring program from FRIENDS FIRST (FF) in the Fall of 2022.

FRIENDS FIRST, a local nonprofit, over the course of 26 years has perfected a peer-to-peer evidence informed mentoring program *Students Teaching About Relationships and Success* (STARS). BBBSC's acquisition of the STARS program ensures the continued success and growth of the program and expands BBBSC's platform of mentoring programs in support of Colorado youth.

The STARS program also fits within BBBSC's 2022-2025 strategic plan "A Brave Path to A Big Future". Elycia Cook, CEO of BBBSC, the management team of BBBSC, and the Board of Directors, finalized the strategic plan in January 2022 following a comprehensive planning process that included eight community listening sessions, each held with community stakeholders and leaders, concerning the future and service of BBBSC and each held through the lens of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The goals of "A Brave Path to A Big Future" aligns with national trends and best practices of mentoring, including peer-to-peer mentoring, and addresses the local needs of youth in Colorado to create pathways to successful futures, a need that has grown as Colorado grapples with the ongoing challenges and consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic which includes a crisis on the social, emotional, and mental health of young people.

With the acquisition of the STARS program, BBBSC will immediately expand the youth currently served by 55% and increase mentors and role models of color who are closer in age, to youth served. This strongly aligns with BBBSC's long-term visions to become the go-to youth serving mentoring agency for one-to-one mentoring plus, and to serve more youth in Colorado.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado through STARS and its one-to-one mentoring programs will:

- Enhance and grow the program services to youth ages 12-19 in post-secondary readiness, healthy decision skills, and developing strong connections to their peers, schools, and communities.
- Increase school-based mentoring programs in support of those struggling with the capacity and funding to effectively address the social emotional wellness and the whole child development for every student.

- Provide an authentic strategic partnership to decrease market competition in the mentoring space. Ultimately, allowing for better use of local resources to provide holistic mentoring support and services to youth and families through one agency.

Elycia Cook, BBBSC CEO and former FF CEO made this statement regarding the continued success of the STARS program. “When I was at FRIENDS FIRST, I used to say if we could only offer one-to-one mentoring with the excellence of BBBSC, for students throughout the school who need extra support and attention, we would be a stronger agency. When I came to BBBSC, I found myself saying if only we offered group or peer mentoring, we would have a suite of mentoring services to tackle the ever-growing youth waiting for a mentor and we would have more mentors from our service communities. With BBBSC’s acquisition of the STARS program, Colorado finally has a nonprofit realizing the best of both worlds.”

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado

Since 1918, [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado](http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org) has operated under the belief that all youth can achieve their full potential with the right guidance and support. The mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado helps children achieve higher aspirations, greater confidence, better relationships, avoid risky behaviors, educational success, and lifelong well-being. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado seeks to change the lives of children facing adversity in meaningful partnership with youth mentees, parents/guardians, volunteers, local communities, and caring philanthropists. For more information visit www.biglittlcolorado.org.

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