

# Big Brothers Big Sisters by Craig Monson, Executive Director September 19, 2011

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Wisconsin was established almost 40 years ago, and the need for its services has never been greater than it is right now. BBBS is a leader in providing professionally supported one-on-one youth mentoring for children from ages 7 through 18. It serves 550 kids per year in Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn, St. Croix and Pierce Counties.

Executive Director Craig Monson was on hand to share the BBBS story and talk about their need for "bigs", especially men. There are currently 95 kids on a waiting list, which is the largest number in the last 10 years, and that number continues to climb. In an effort to meet these needs, BBBS is currently in the middle of a major recruiting campaign.

According to Monson, anybody and everybody can help in a number of different ways, but "bigs" is definitely the biggest need. If someone can commit to volunteer one hour per week for one year, they can be a "big", and make a huge difference in some kid's life. Monson asked us to think back to our youth, and to remember some adult, other than a parent or relative, that had a positive impact on our life. Most of these kids, who have demonstrated a need, don't have that caring adult in their lives... and that's where a "big" can make a difference. The BBBS mentoring programs have been proven to work. One hour per week... that's all it takes... to do anything you like... maybe help with some homework, go to the YMCA, play a sport, go to a movie, do something at school, eat a meal, or just hang out and talk.

If someone is interested in being a "big", the first step is to simply call BBBS for more information (715-835-0161) or go to the their website at [www.bbbsnw.org](http://www.bbbsnw.org). Then consider attending one of the orientation meetings... all without any obligation to proceed. The next step is to go through an interview and background check process. According to Monson, BBBS puts forth a great deal of effort up front to get the best matches possible. Good matches, along with ongoing monitoring and follow-up surveys, result in positive outcomes.

(Editors note: due to some audio trouble at our Monday meeting, we were unable to view the "Start Something Big" video. It only runs for 4:28... check it out at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0P2DpmlzEI&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0P2DpmlzEI&feature=player_embedded))



**Craig Monson**, Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Wisconsin