



MEMBERSHIP INTEREST

BY BRUCE MOON, DSC MEMBER

WHY NOT PASS IT ON?

The Big Brothers Big Sisters “Bigs Outdoors – Outdoor Mentors” program is unique in that it simultaneously addresses three major concerns. The plan is simple; provide outdoor experiences for children of single parent homes. The results are outstanding.

Children of single parent homes face increased risks that can affect their potential. Big Brothers Big Sisters provides help in the form of one-on-one mentoring. Studies have proven the effects a positive adult role model can have in a child’s life. One study showed that Little Brothers and Little Sisters are:

- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs;
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol;
- 52% less likely to skip school;
- 37% less likely to skip class;
- More confident in their schoolwork performance;
- Better able to get along with their families.

The benefits to society are significant for each and every child who becomes a productive, responsible adult. A person who feels ownership in his life works, pays, and votes, and contributes to society as a whole.

Research has shown that at least three positive outdoor experiences are necessary for a child to develop an interest in the outdoors that will carry forward to adulthood. Those who use the outdoors provide the majority of funding for conservation efforts. Fewer “consumers” of the outdoors means less money for government agencies charged with providing access to, and protecting, outdoor opportunities for future generations. Unless children experience the outdoors, and as adults, utilize the outdoors, spend money to preserve the outdoors, and vote to protect the outdoors, conservation efforts face a death spiral of decreasing interest, funding and protection leading to ever fewer opportunities, and ever lessening participation.

Fewer and fewer children are able to experience the outdoors. Children of single parent homes have fewer outdoor opportunities, particularly those children raised in urban areas. An entire



BB Calvin and LB Colton after a duck hunt, January 2010.

segment of the population may never experience the outdoors, a segment that will help decide the fate of conservation efforts and outdoor activities in the coming years. Big Brothers Big Sisters “Bigs Outdoors – Outdoor Mentors” can help.

Bigs Outdoors needs three things to help children, conserve the outdoors, and make the world a better place.

First, the program needs outdoor opportunities for existing matches. If the match is interested in hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, they need a place to go to experience the outdoors. Many “Bigs” are young adults, with limited finances and limited experience in the outdoors themselves. Free or reduced prices for hunters safety courses, culling operations for wildlife management, and access to fishing holes are just some examples of how both Bigs and Littles can enjoy the outdoors now, and help protect the outdoors in the future.

Second, Bigs Outdoors needs adult mentors who love the outdoors to get involved. Helping a child experience the outdoors also teaches the child responsibility, discipline and other necessary skills of adulthood.

Third, we need money and in-kind donations. We need donations of fishing rods for kids, or money for a hunter education class or license. Money is also needed to develop presentations to groups, to seek grants, or to provide logistic support for existing matches who want to experience the great outdoors, and to recruit more.

There is much fun to be had in the outdoors, much to be learned, and much to be taught. It won’t be easy, or quick, but it is a simple goal – getting kids into the outdoors. Come help us pass it on.

To find out more about Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Bigs Outdoors program, visit the BBBS website at www.bbbsnt.org or call your local Big Brothers Big Sisters office today. *CT*

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