



**YMCA of
Central East Ontario**

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

YMCA Steps Up for Big Brothers Big Sisters

Belleville, ON – The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect and impact on many of our citizens, our seniors, our children and our most vulnerable. We have witnessed the strain put on our current health care system and health care providers, our education system, our small businesses community and the not-for-profit charitable sector.

The impact of the pandemic caused a number of agencies to cancel special fundraising events throughout the year that they depended on for their very survival. One such local agency was the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties who found itself in a position where they were going to have to cease operations leaving over 200 young people without the opportunity to benefit from a life-changing mentoring relationship to ignite and spark their potential. Mentors form strong one-to-one relationships with their mentees, which strengthen their social emotional learning and executive functioning skills, ensuring they develop into resilient young people who are able to overcome life's adversities, and lead productive and healthy lives. During this very challenging time we need to amplify, work together and expand our efforts in facilitating mentoring relationships between our matches virtually and providing our volunteer mentors with guidance on staying emotionally connected to the youth we serve while physical distancing.

"BBBS Board of Directors together with our Executive Director experienced a crisis early in the pandemic, as the reality of no fundraising income and limited avenues of revenue became a reality. The board began a long process of research and consultations with professionals to explore the future of the agency all while ensuring programming was uninterrupted. Collaboration between agencies have lead to a partnership that will ensure the success of programs to our children and youth throughout H&PEC. Together we are stronger!" said BBBS Board Chair Brenda Snider.

Relationships matter, and in the case of Big Brother Big Sisters, a long historical relationship with the YMCA of Central East Ontario and professional relationship between Board Chair Brenda Snider, Executive Director Arlene Coculuzzi and YMCA President and CEO David Allen gave new life to the local chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters in our community.

A discussion around the plight of the organization with Mr. Allen has lead to the Big Brothers Big Sisters moving in and sharing office space at the YMCAs Association Services Office located in the Avaya Building.

"It was really not a difficult decision to make, I believe our community is stronger and better with Big Brothers Big Sisters then without it. Further, I think by stepping up and lending a hand to another agency it demonstrates our commitment to our YMCA Values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility and Inclusiveness" said David Allen, YMCA President and CEO.

“Along with our Board of Directors, we look forward to new beginnings and possibilities to help us become more resilient for young people in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties.” Arlene Coculuzzi, Executive Director, BBBSHPEC. “We will be Stronger Together. We are honoured to have this opportunity to develop and flourish as we see in the services we provide to our communities in HPEC.

The YMCA will also assist the organization in managing their financial reporting and bookkeeping, will provide support in the area of Information Technology and Marketing as well.

Big Brothers Big Sisters will initially pay no rent or for the support services from the YMCA. The YMCA and Big Brothers Big Sisters have agreed upon a future payment plan that is based on allowing the organization the time to bounce back financially and become more sustainable.

“I think if we look at the big picture we can envision a real opportunity here for both organizations from a synergy and programmatic perspective. By sharing resources and working together we build capacity and can do some exceptional programming that can really impact and change the lives of young people in our community” said Allen.