Operation Bigs

A Unique Partnership in San Diego County that provides mentors for elementary school aged children from military families.
“1% of Americans may be fighting our wars, but we need 100% of Americans to be supporting our troops and their families.”

--Dr. Jill Biden
Big Brothers Big Sisters

• Over 100 years of proven experience
• In San Diego since 1961
• 450 affiliates nationwide
• Recruitment, screening, matching and supervision done by professionally trained, degreed staff
Mission

The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Diego County is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better.
How Deployment Affects Children

- Military children will, on average, attend 6 to 9 different schools during the course of their parents’ military career.
- 60% of military spouses say their children had increased levels of fear and anxiety when their husbands/wives went to war.
- 57% reported increased behavioral problems at home.
- 36% cited increased behavioral problems at school.
- The children most affected by deployments were between 6 and 13 years of age.

» 2009 Pentagon Survey of 13,000 military spouses; 2009 UCLA study
Effects of Deployment, cont.

- Military children with deployed parents are 2 ½ times more likely to develop psychological problems than American children in general.
- The immediate factor appeared to be high stress in the parent who remained at home. 42% of such parents were found to be under “high-risk levels of parental stress.”
- A correlation exists between the level of support a family receives and a lowering of risk level. (2009 Study of spouses of deployed Army personnel)
The Seeds are Planted

• San Diego County – most dominant military presence in the U.S. – over 250,000 military personnel and family members
• Largest source of volunteers – locally based Marines and Sailors
• Given these demographics, BBBS of San Diego County has always served children of military personnel within our general programming
• In 2004, local military families were feeling the effects of several years of war and multiple deployments and reached out to BBBS for support
OPERATION BIGS:
A one of a kind program of
Responding to the mentoring needs of children in military families of deployable parents

Big Brothers Big Sisters
Launch of Operation Bigs

California first lady Maria Shriver greeted students yesterday at Mary Fay Pendleton Elementary School, where she helped to launch an expansion of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program to the Camp Pendleton campus. John Gastaldo / Union-Tribune photos
Securing Funding

• In 2004, Jack in the Box Foundation helped BBBS of San Diego County launch Operation Bigs at Camp Pendleton. To date, they have continued to provide core annual funding for Operation Bigs.

• Given the military presence in San Diego, financial support from T. Boone Pickens Foundation, the Nice Guys and Jack in the Box has encouraged and inspired other donors to step up to provide additional support for this program.

• Operation Bigs is the program that we find to be most readily funded by foundations and individual donors with a heart for the military.
Funding, cont.

• If a company has any association with the military, e.g. Pacific Marine Credit Union, program funding, and/or volunteer recruitment, is likely.

• Thanks to the Jack in the Box Foundation, T. Boone and Madeleine Pickens, The Nice Guys, Phil's BBQ, The Cox Kids Foundation, and so many other community supporters, the Operation Bigs program has taken off and continues to grow.

• But in order to serve our community’s large number of military children and serve the six schools on our waiting list who have requested Operation Bigs due to the significant amount of military children enrolled at their schools, additional support is still needed and sought after by our development team.
Growth and Expansion at

- 2004 – 2005: 1 school; 36 children
- 2006: 87 children
- 2007: 103 children
- 2008: 123 children
- 2009: 5 schools; 145 children
Expansion into San Diego Naval Bases

- Fall 2009 – Two new sites added in military housing communities in Coronado, San Diego; introduction of first site-based program not located at a school
- Spring 2010 – Two additional sites added: Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar and military housing community in San Diego
- 2010: 9 schools; 182 children
- 2011: 9 schools; 221 children
Operation Bigs Sessions

• Meet one hour one day a week after school during the school year
• Same day and time each week
• Supervised setting
• Session capacity is 25 matches
Our Children are:

• Military dependents
• At least 7 years old and attending elementary school
• Able to participate for one year

Referred by:
• Teachers and counselors
• Daycare staff
• Parents
• Other service agencies
Our Volunteers:

Volunteers from all ages and walks of life:

• 18 – 84 years old
• Active-duty military and spouses
• Retired military and spouses
• Veterans and spouses
• Civilians – employed, retired
• Students
• Homemakers
School Liaisons

- Link between BBBS and school staff
- Assist teachers with referrals
- Recommend OB program as a resource for children in need
- Ensure that parents complete necessary paperwork
- Coordinate the logistics of the operation of the program – room, school attendance checks
Getting Started

• Know your local military community
  Branch of Service
  Terminology
  Base Family Support Systems
  Base School Support Systems
• http://www.militaryfactory.com
• http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/
Air Force

- Youngest branch – 1947
- Major Commands, Numbered Air Forces, Wings, Groups, Squadrons, Flights
- Bases; Airmen
- Airman and Family Readiness Center
- www.AFCrossroads.com
Army

- The largest of the five branches and the main ground force
- Corps, Divisions, Brigades, Battalions, Companies, Platoons, Squads
- Installations, Soldiers
- Army Community Services
- www.ArmyOneSource.com
Navy

- Maintains freedom of the seas
- Commands, Fleets, Ships, Squadrons, etc.
- Installations, Sailors, Seamen
- Fleet and Family Support Centers
- www.nffsp.org
Marine Corps

- The infantry of the Navy
- Divisions, Regiments, Battalions, Companies, Platoons, Squads
- Bases, Marines
- Marine Corps Community Services – Marine and Family Services
- www.usmc-mccs.org/installations
Coast Guard

- Under the Department of Homeland Security
- Protect U.S. economic interests in our ports, waterways, along the coasts and in international waters
- Bases, Coastguardsmen
- www.uscg.mil/worklife
National Guard/Reserves

- Army Reserve Family Programs
  - www.arfp.org
- National Guard Family Program
  - www.jointservicessupport.org/FP
- Army National Guard
  - www.arng.army.mil/familyservices
Military Partners

- School Liaison Officers (SLO)
- Family Readiness Group Leaders/Family Readiness Officers/Ombudsmen
- Family Service Centers/Marine Corps Family Team Building
- Housing Services
- Officers Wives Club/Enlisted Wives Club
- Chaplains
Role of Military School Liaison Officers (SLO)

- Identify areas of greatest need
- Provide guidance in navigating the military base commands to gain support
- Facilitate our initial meetings with school and community center personnel
- Assist with communication strategies to publicize our program among military commands
Community Partners

- Schools/School Counselors
- Armed Services YMCA – www.asymca.org
- Local Chamber – military committees
- Church Military Ministries
- Other service agencies offering services to military families
- Operation: Military Kids
Getting Families Involved

• Positive approach – dispel perception that mentoring programs only serve low-income, single-parent families
• Additional support to help families during times of deployment and long working hours
• Extra individual (one-on-one) attention
• Because of frequent moves, children do not have relationships with extended family members, i.e. grandparents, aunts or uncles, older cousins
• Utilize marketing materials with testimonial quotes from military parents
• “Sergio’s Big Brother has “made a big impression on him, helping him deal with his emotions and open up. I don’t see him crying anymore the way he used to. He actually talks to me about his feelings, if he’s feeling sad or if he’s having a bad day, or if someone made him mad.” His school performance has also improved. Earlier this year, he was honored as “Student of the Month.”

• “The self esteem that Wesley and Chris gave to my boys during the hardest trials of their young lives has made a positive and remarkable impact on them. It has given them the extra strength of knowing that despite this war, and where their dad goes, he loves them and there are others rooting for them.”

• “Kazin has handled his father’s deployment so much better this time around. During the first deployment, he would cry every day about how much he missed his father. While he still misses his father very much this deployment, he also looks forward to seeing his Big Brother each week. When the weekend comes, he says, “I can’t wait ‘til Tuesday when I get to see Shane.”
“The Bigs helped me as a mother deal with the emotional impact a deployment has on my children. To know they have another adult to go to to feel special and get some undivided attention from, has helped me and my children during this deployment. My son and daughter felt a special connection with their Bigs and they felt appreciated. It was nice for them to have a person give them 100% of their attention, something they just have trouble getting on a regular basis due to the fact that their is only one of me. My husband felt very happy that his children were comforted and had a special relationship with someone who understood what situation they were in ... and took special care to "care "for them. He felt very relieved that Jake and Bri were so happy and felt so supported."
Operation Bigs in the Media

• http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/0db249e2#/0db249e2/1


• http://camppendleton.patch.com/articles/fishing-food-families-and-fun-during-operation-field-day

Volunteer Recruitment

- Single Marine Program
- Volunteer Program Ofc.
- Chaplains
- OWC/ENC
- Base newspaper
- Service Clubs – Rotary
- Veterans Organizations
- Military friendly companies
- Retired groups, organizations
- Underground websites – lejeuneunderground.com
- Churches
- Local colleges
- Local newspapers
- Online newspapers – patch.com
- Volunteer websites
- Fliers – gyms, barber shops, Starbucks (near the base)
Marketing

• Positive PR: Market the program through positive match stories demonstrating impact. Newspapers and TV are looking for stories that are relevant to what’s going on in the world. Anything to do with military families is a hot button right now, and if you pitch a good story, they are likely to bite.

• Video presentations: We use our Operations Bigs video at corporate presentations where the business has an interest in the military or supporting positive military programs. An inspirational video about the needs of the families you are working with is a great way to get people emotionally invested.

• Branded Collateral (handouts): It’s important to create materials that speak directly to the audience you are addressing, including differentiating between branches of the military, so they can directly relate to the program.
• The Big Challenge: An annual, incentive-based challenge (with donated prizes) to our current volunteers to recruit as many new volunteers as possible within a defined timeframe.

• Garner political support to raise awareness:
  – Maria Shriver’s visits and endorsements in 2004 and 2007.
  – The First Lady Michelle Obama – “A wonderful program that we were proud to help celebrate at the White House during National Mentoring Month -- that was Big Brothers Big Sisters of San Diego and their 'Operation Bigs,' which provides mentors to so many great military kids at Pendleton."
  – Letters of support from the Commandant of the Marine Corps Installations West and the Camp Pendleton Base Commander. When military leaders provide support for the program, volunteers and funding will follow.
Resources

- Military Homefront – www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil
- Military School Liaison Officers Program - http://militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/resources.cfm?colId=liaison
- Military Child Education Coalition – www.militarychild.org
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