

# 2025 Impact Report



Big Brothers Big Sisters  
OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

**IT TAKES  
LITTLE TO  
BE BIG**

# Our Impact Our Littles

93% REJECT DRUGS, VIOLENCE

91% FEEL SENSE OF BELONGING

92% PLAN TO GO TO COLLEGE

86% IMPROVE THEIR STUDIES

Dear Supporters and Community Members,

It is an honor to share this year's impact report with you. The past twelve months have been remarkable for our organization and, most importantly, for the children and families we serve. We hope this report fills you with pride, knowing that none of this would have been possible without your partnership.



Michael McNamee, right, with Artis Stevens, BBBSA President and CEO

2025 has been a particularly challenging year for our region. Many families continue to feel the lingering effects of Hurricane Helene, along with other crises, mental health struggles, food insecurity, and significant disruptions to daily life. Our organization rose to meet these challenges with wrap-around services that make our model so effective. Because of the deep trust and relationships we've built over time, we were able to provide support quickly, compassionately, and in ways that truly made a difference.

We are equally proud of the growth across our programs, including High School Bigs, Group Mentoring, and the national recognition received by the leadership of our partner, Project MARS/AmeriCorps. As you read this report, please remember that each data point represents a real child in our community: a young person who now has a mentor to look up to, new opportunities to thrive, and the chance to reach their full potential.

Where do we go from here? We know our programs are effective, our staff is exceptional, and our community is resilient. But we also know that many children are still waiting for support. We are deeply grateful for your partnership, and we are looking forward to the year ahead, continuing this work together.

With appreciation,  
Michael McNamee Ph.D., Board Chair



*Lelia Duncan, BBBSWNC President and CEO, has been elected chair of the NC Coalition of BBBS and reappointed Co-Chair of BBBS of America's National Leadership Organizational Excellence Committee.*

# Our youth live with

25% PARENT IN/WAS IN JAIL

86% FREE/REDUCED LUNCH

53% SINGLE MOTHERS  
SINGLE FATHERS 7%

14% GRANDPARENTS

The youth and families we serve face **levels of stress, anxiety, and depression** unlike anything we've seen before. Hurricane Helene's disruption, prolonged school closures, social media's isolating effects, and ongoing economic and political instability have left our Littles struggling to find balance and hope.

**BBBSWNC meets this head-on.** Through group activities, mentoring relationships, and wellness initiatives, we provide safe spaces where youth reconnect, rebuild confidence, and learn healthy coping skills.

**We extend that support to guardians,** helping families access resources, strengthen communication, and foster resilience together.

Our work reaches far beyond mentoring - it rebuilds the emotional foundation that young people need to thrive.

BBBSWNC's programs restore stability and belonging, serving as a lifeline that ensures **every child and family we serve feels seen, supported, and never alone.**

## ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH

3,200  
families served

After the hurricane, we reached out with supplies, financial assistance, case management, and more.

# HURRICANE HELENE'S LASTING IMPACT

CHILDREN OF NATURAL DISASTERS  
experience  
Physical/mental health problems  
Disrupted learning/school absenteeism

# CARES

CREATING ACCESS TO RESOURCES, EVENTS & SUPPORT

Our wrap-around family support includes

## Basic Needs

Food pantries  
Housing help

## Legal Help

Reduced-cost or  
free legal aid

## Career Support

Workforce  
training and  
readiness

## Mental Wellness

Counseling  
access &  
resilience  
tools

## Experiences

Free/discounted  
enrichment opps,  
events, outings

## Education

Tutoring &  
school support

BBBSWNC partners with trusted organizations to keep every family connected and supported, whether the Little is matched or waiting for a Big.

**"Samiya, it's hard to believe we've been matched for seven and a half years! From the beginning, it was clear you had big dreams, ambition, intelligence, and maturity.**

**You love learning any skill that makes you independent, evident in your scholastic achievement. Together we have searched for colleges and made a timeline of the steps to take to realize this goal.**

**While it is bittersweet to think about you heading off to college, I feel so very lucky and grateful to have witnessed your growth."**

**"You will always be a special person in my life."  
Love, Meredith**



Samiya and Meredith, summer 2025

## Inspired by a Little

Big Sister Meredith's letter to Little Sister Samiya

Making robots with  
engineers at Eaton Corp.



## PREPARING LITTLES FOR LIFE BEYOND BBBS

*"Matches not only had to work together to problem solve," says BBBSWNC staffer Tessa Valladares. "There was also a little bit of career exploration. I heard them talking to the engineers about what they do there and how they got into it!"*

Big Futures, our college and career readiness program, equips young people for post-high school success via mentoring, education, and access to key opportunities.

## PROJECT MARS/AMERICORPS

### Outstanding Leadership

Congrats to Project MARS' Katie Snow and Victor Barrett, honored for outstanding service by America's Service Commissions during its annual Innovation and Leadership Awards ceremony.



Making a big difference in local schools, 45 Project MARS/AmeriCorps members serve over 2,400 students, helping with schoolwork and social skills. They helped Habitat for Humanity build a house for a family affected by Hurricane Helene. Members volunteer at local museums, thrift stores, and volunteer fire departments.

*"This is a super group of members, and we are super-proud of their service hearts," says Project MARS Program Director Katie Snow.*

# HIGH SCHOOL BIGS .....

KIDS LOOK UP TO SOMEONE WHO'S A BIT OLDER

- Learn about mentorship
- Are taught leadership curriculum
- Are trained, guided, and supported
- Earn service hours for college



Last school year, Noe wanted to improve his English. After being matched with a mentor who shares his language and identity - Jesus, his High School Big - Noe found his voice. Now he speaks English with much more assurance.

*"At the start of the school year, Noe was a little unsure of himself when speaking English," recalls Regional Program Director Danielle Hernandez. "Now he speaks up with confidence and answers in his own words."*

*"It's been such a joy to watch his confidence grow."*

## GROUP MENTORING

HELPING MIDDLE SCHOOLERS DEAL WITH STRESS

Volunteer mentors work with small groups of school-referred students on their concerns about relationships, self-image, bullying, and other issues. Supported throughout, the kids work to build upon strengths and address weaknesses while learning communication and coping skills, as well as online safety and substance abuse prevention.

*"Group helped me figure out that I could make friends and that I was worth being nice to."*

*"My favorite things about Group were talking and making new friends."*

- From Buncombe County students



# OUR REACH IN 2025

**475** BBBS Matches  
**1,015** Youth Served  
**>2,400** Served by  
Project MARS  
**>3,890** Reached

**200** Families  
in CARES

**148** New matches  
in 2025

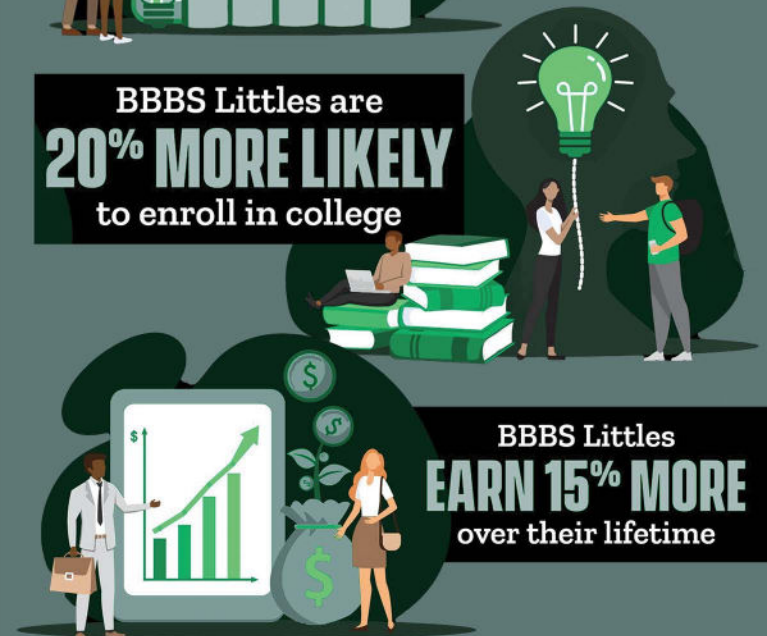
**46%** 2025 growth in  
new matches

**65%** Matches  
>1 year old

## MENTORING CLOSES THE OPPORTUNITY GAP



BBBS Littles are  
**20% MORE LIKELY**  
to enroll in college



BBBSA "Long-term Impact of Mentors" economic study



## LITTLES WHO IMPROVED THEIR BEHAVIOR

**81%**

School engagement  
Self confidence  
School behavior

**76%**

Motivation to learn  
Relationship with peers

Academic performance

**68%**

2025 BBBSWNC school surveys

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Every dollar invested in BBBS mentoring  
pays for itself within just seven years,  
creating sustained economic benefits.

LEARN



DONATE



## OUR VISION

All youth achieve  
their full potential

## WE SUPPORT

Littles, Bigs,  
Families, Schools,  
Communities,  
Staff, Volunteers,  
Supporters



## OUR MISSION

Create and support  
mentoring  
relationships that  
ignite the power and  
promise of youth

## WE APPRECIATE

Donors, Sponsors,  
Allies

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Jen Kirkpatrick, 1st chair

Michael Calogero, 2nd chair

Veronica Colvard, secretary

Josh Mellon, treasurer

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*"It's an honor to work alongside such dedicated and visionary leaders in North Carolina and across the country. Together, we're not only building a more unified mentoring movement - we're helping young people unlock their greatest potential and imagine brighter futures."*

*- Lelia Duncan, BBBSWNC President and CEO*

### "DO THE RIGHT THING"

DYK?

BBBS was named one of  
America's most trusted  
nonprofits  
to "do the right thing,"  
according to  
Morning Consult, a U.S.  
business intelligence  
company.

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