



PART I: WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

YOU HAVE THE POWER

You know the stereotypes. Kids these days are apathetic. They're disrespectful. They're troublemakers. And all they care about is themselves.

Well, there are about 68 million people in the United States under the age of 18. So if this stereotype is right, that would mean that about a quarter of the nation's population is doing nothing but skipping school and being couch potatoes.

The fact is that these days about 70% of high school students are volunteering and helping to effect positive change in their communities. **70%**.

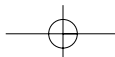
And that's not all. The percentage of young people who are making contributions like this has been increasing for at least the last 30 years. In fact, the rate of youth volunteerism and service is higher today than it has ever been since people started keeping records for this kind of thing. **Ever.**

So what does this mean for you?

Well, for one thing, it means that you're not alone. By serving as a mentor to a younger child, you're joining millions of other young people who have decided that they want to be take the lead in improving their schools and communities.

It also means that you have considerable power. **You have the power** to be a positive influence on the life a child. **You have the power** to exercise your leadership and potential. **You have the power** to be a socially responsible citizen. **And you have the power** to make a difference.

This program gives you a chance to use that power.



CONGRATS

Congratulations! If you're reading this, it's because you've been selected to be a Teen Big. You're now part of a growing group of high school mentors who are making a lasting impact in the lives of mentees, or "Littles." You're about to start a journey that will not only make a difference for a young person in need of a friend and role model, but also shape your life in many positive ways.

The Handbook you hold in your hands is designed specifically for Teen Bigs like you. It provides detailed but user-friendly information that will help you throughout your involvement as a teen mentor. Combined with ongoing training and support from Big Brothers Big Sisters, this Handbook should give you just about all the tools you'll need.

Thanks for your commitment to helping children develop into healthy, happy, and productive citizens. Good luck. And have fun!

A LITTLE BIT OF BACKGROUND BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

This Handbook is the product of a collaboration between Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) and YouthLaunch, a nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging young people in meaningful and valued service. The collaboration, known as the Teen Mentoring Initiative (TMI), is an effort to support and enhance teen mentoring programs operated by BBBS agencies. So even though most of your contact will be with someone from BBBS, it is thanks to a broad collaborative effort that you have this Handbook and many other resources to help you during your time as a Teen Big.

HOW IT ALL WORKS

Here's the deal. A BBBS agency partners with a local high school to recruit and select Teen Bigs like you. The agency also partners with a feeder elementary school to identify children most in need of mentors. A BBBS representative, who we'll refer to as your BBBS Coach, will provide you and the other Teen Bigs from your high school with some training—using this Handbook, as well as a Web-based training tool that your BBBS Coach will tell you about. After the training, you'll be carefully matched with a Little from the partner elementary school. Then throughout the school year, you and your fellow Teen Bigs will go to the elementary school on a weekly basis to mentor your Little. You'll also meet regularly with your BBBS Coach and the other Teen Bigs to reflect on your experiences, share ideas, and plan for future sessions with your Littles. That's it in a nutshell.