



Media Release

mPower Youth Mentoring program launched

Calgary, September 10, 2008 – The Alberta Mentor Foundation for Youth (AMFY) and Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area today announced the launch of *mPower Youth Mentoring*, a youth mentoring program offered in 68 junior and senior high schools in Calgary, Airdrie and Cochrane. Formerly known as AMFY, the launch of the *mPower Youth Mentoring* program as a Big Brothers and Big Sisters program was announced in a ceremony held at Forest Lawn High School.

Alberta Mentor Foundation for Youth board chair, Steele Curry, said, “By merging our program with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and by bringing together the knowledge and expertise of both organizations, we believe we will be in a much stronger position to provide significantly more young people with mentoring support to achieve their potential, and to be a strong voice and resource for growing mentorship in the communities we serve.”

As a program of Big Brothers and Big Sisters, young people and volunteers in *mPower* mentoring relationships will enjoy access to additional mentoring opportunities offered by Big Brothers and Big Sisters including scholarship programs, mentor/mentee events, tickets to entertainment and sporting events, and more.

Also speaking at the launch celebration, Paul Harrison, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area board president said, “We are very pleased to welcome *mPower Youth Mentoring* to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters family and commend their Board of Directors for their vision and commitment – to mentoring and to the young people we serve. I am confident that our shared passion and belief in mentoring will take mentorship to new heights in this community, reaching more children and youth, and providing a full spectrum of mentoring services to help all young people achieve their potential.”

mPower Youth Mentoring is a school-based mentoring program that helps junior and senior high school students achieve their full potential through supportive in-school mentoring relationships. Adult volunteer mentors (20 years and older) spend one-to-one time with their mentee, one hour per week at the mentee's school.

Anyone interested in becoming an mPower youth mentor, may call Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area at 403-777-3535 or visit their website at www.bbbscalgary.com

More than 40 years old, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area is a non-profit registered charity that was founded by the Canadian Progress Clubs of Calgary in 1994, through the merger of Aunts at Large, Big Sisters of Calgary and Uncles at Large. It is our mission to impact the lives of young people and volunteers through the power of mentoring. To do this we match children and youth who would benefit from a one-to-one relationship with caring volunteer mentors. In 2007-2008 we served nearly 1,100 children and their families through our mentorship programs and services. To learn more about Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area, or to become a mentor, please visit www.bbbscalgary.com or call (403) 777-3535.

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BACKGROUND

On April 18, 2008, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area (BBBS) and Alberta Youth Mentor Foundation for Youth (AMFY) signed an agreement to merge the AMFY youth mentoring program into the Big Brothers and Big Sisters family of in-school mentoring programs.



The Alberta Mentor Foundation for Youth (AMFY) was founded in 1995 by a group of Calgary business professionals and educators who were concerned about the high number of youth that were not obtaining their high school diplomas. From 14 relationships established in 1995 in three Calgary Board of Education Schools, AMFY had grown to support more than 280 relationships in the 2006-2007 school year in 68 schools in Calgary, Airdrie and Cochrane.

Effective in the fall of 2008, AMFY will cease operations as a separate entity and will officially become part of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area as the *mPower Youth Mentoring* program.



Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area (BBBS) is an incorporated nonprofit society and registered charitable organization that was founded in 1994 through the merger of Uncles at Large founded by the men's Canadian Progress Clubs, Aunts at Large which was initiated by the ladies' Progress Clubs, and Big Sisters of Calgary founded by a group of dedicated women.

Through its founding organizations, Big Brothers and Big Sisters has been providing mentoring services in Calgary since the 1970's.

Today, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area provides a full spectrum of mentoring services to nearly 1,100 young people 6 to 18 years of age through its numerous school-based, and community-based programs, activities, and scholarship program.

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The Power of Mentoring

Anyone who has been a mentor to a young person can see firsthand the difference they are making in the life of their mentee including:

- increased self-confidence that results in setting higher goals and reaching them
- the strength of character to make healthy choices and decisions
- hopefulness for the future
- the resiliency to cope with adversity

Research conducted on Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs in both Canada and the United States have shown that the mentoring relationship can also have a positive impact on school attendance, self-confidence, and the prevention of substance abuse. For example, when compared to their peers who were not involved in a mentoring relationship, youth involved in Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring programs showed dramatic results.

- 70% showed improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- 90% had improved relations with their peers
- 75% showed an increase in school grades and attendance
- 80% graduated from high school
- 46% were less likely than a control group to initiate drug use
- 78% from a social assistance background no longer relied on this form of support

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area monitors and evaluates every mentor relationship. Following are the results of recent surveys:

- 99% of Little Brothers and Little Sisters surveyed are excited about who they will be when they grow up
- 97% of Little Brothers and Little Sisters surveyed know they need to go to school
- 100% of Little Brothers and Little Sisters surveyed feel special when they spend time with their mentors
- 99% of Little Brothers and Little Sisters surveyed say they learned something from their mentor
- 100% of Little Brothers and Little Sisters surveyed stated that they know their mentor cares about them

What people are saying

Although statistics are important, the real power of mentoring is best summed up by the mentors and mentees themselves. The following quotes are from mentors, mentees, families and teachers involved in Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary and Area programs.

Mentees

“Charles has taught me how to read instructions and to play games fairly and I wish he could spend two hours a week with me.”

“Finally I have a mentor and he’s the best. He was worth waiting for.”

Mentors

“Some days I might be informed that Alex is having a bad day; but when he’s with me during our hour, he’s as happy as ever before.”

“When we started, my mentee got frustrated and upset quickly. He had trouble concentrating for long periods, but I’ve noticed that now he talks about his feelings and has much better manners.”

“He has changed so much over the last two years; it’s such a joy to watch. He started off very shy and not talkative, and now he can blab on with me for our entire hour, and keep talking. He voices his opinions freely and seems to walk around with his head held high. He has changed from a meek young man to one boasting with confidence. I think he is a wonderful young man who will do great in anything he wishes.”

Parents

“The program has had positive effects on my child’s progress and goals. He has more pride in himself and his accomplishments.”

“Being ‘cool’ is no longer Brooke’s priority. She has taken part in more school activities, i.e., student council, Turn-Off the Violence Program and is more focused on her academics.”

“I am so happy that Cody has a best friend that can influence his life in a good way.”

Teachers

“I think he realizes that relationships can happen when you show respect mutually between two people and he sees himself as more worthy of such respect.”

“I feel the mentoring program has prepared Carolyn for the transition to Junior High by making her more confident in her abilities.”