

# Big Brothers, Sisters celebrate 30 years

Clubs + Associations

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By ERIK CHALHOUB

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

**SANTA CRUZ** — Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County will celebrate its 30th anniversary on Thursday at the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor, 135 Fifth Ave., from 5:30-8 p.m.

During the celebration, the organization will receive proclamations and letters of recognition from Santa Cruz Mayor Don Lane, representatives from Assemblymembers Luis Alejo and Bill Monning's offices and Sen. Sam Farr's district director. Elected officials from Watsonville, Capitola, Scotts Valley and Santa Cruz will also be in

attendance.

A silent auction will be held from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Since 1982, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County has mentored more than 4,500 children.

"Children who have a mentor in their life are more likely to stay in school, avoid drugs and alcohol, and make healthier life choices," said Marie Cubillas, executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

All volunteer mentors are carefully screened and mentored, she said, and are matched with a 7- to 14-year-old child, primarily from a single-parent

family. The mentors then make a one-year commitment to spend time with their "Little Brother" or "Little Sister" for two to four times a month for a few hours. The goal of these sessions is to help the child grow and learn how to live a successful life.

Mentors give children an "opportunity to see life differently," Cubillas said.

According to a recent Program Outcome Evaluation report on Big Brothers Big Sisters' One-to-One program, 100 percent of responding parents noted an improvement in their

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child's ability to meet and get along with other children, and 90 percent of children believed that their grades had improved since participating in the program. Also, 90 percent of parents noted an improvement in their child's self-confidence.

A 2009 study reported that program alumni were 27 per-

cent more likely than non-alumni to receive a four-year college degree.

Anyone who would like to become a mentor can visit [www.santacruzbbbs.org](http://www.santacruzbbbs.org) or call 464-8691 for more information. More than 70 children are still waiting for volunteer mentors, Cubillas said.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters is located on 1500 41st Ave., Suite 250, in Capitola.