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BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF EASTERN MISSOURI CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN CAPE GIRARDEAU

St. Louis – September 21, 2020 – To celebrate two decades in Cape Girardeau, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri (BBBSEMO) is launching a series of original content and special events that include a Cape Chamber of Commerce ribbon-cutting on Thursday, September 24th and “Thank You Squad” deliveries to families, volunteers, donors, schools, and other key supporters of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Each piece in that series will spotlight the people and partnerships that have been transforming young lives, through intentional relationships, in Southeast Missouri since 2000.

The idea of starting a Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter in Cape Girardeau began with community members inspired to do more, and better, for the youth of their region. At the time, youth-centric organizations in the area focused more on activities rather than 1:1 mentoring relationships.

“We saw a great need for mentoring and thought that Big Brothers Big Sisters’s mission best fit our area,” says Jason Crowell, past Missouri House Representative and State Senator. “We historically had strong Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts but nothing like BBBS.”

Establishing a Cape Girardeau office created a new avenue for serving young people with mentorship and opened doors to vibrant partnerships around improving youth outcomes. Partnerships with institutions and organizations that made setting up Big Brothers Big Sisters in the Southern region possible from the start have thrived and grown over the last 20 years, and include:

- United Way of Southeast Missouri: consistent sponsor of Cape Big Brothers Big Sisters, a partnership that has thrived since 2000
- Southeast Missouri University (SEMO): Cape Big Brothers Big Sisters’s “founding” gift maker and M.O.U. partner for wraparound support of BBBSEMO 1:1 match graduates in the agency’s Big Futures program
- Cape Girardeau Public Schools: Pioneering partner on BBBSEMO’s ABCToday initiative, a nationally recognized early-warning system using data to inform collective impact work for K-12 students; first and only district in the US serving over 4,100 students through the model in nine schools.

Southern Region Executive Director Ashley Seiler joined BBBS’s Cape staff in early 2003, just a few years after the office opened, to coordinate all its school-based matches.

“Being newly-founded then, one of the most important aspects of our work was building trust. We did that by showing up as promised, striving to match kids, and seeking partnerships with others,” says Seiler. “BBBS in Cape has worked hard to maintain and grow those relationships all these years because we know, at the end of the day, relationships are everything.”

Today, Big Brothers Big Sisters in Cape is focused on leveraging proven and new relationships to support the whole child. By promoting youth growth and expanding horizons through innovations like First Job, a new initiative that equips teens with hard- and soft work skills, BBBS continues seeking ever better ways to reinforce the stability of its Southern region youth and families.

“I’m confident the same passion, partnership, and innovation that’s fueled our work the past 20 years will propel us through the next 20. Our strengthened, expanded programs and our future innovations will be co-designed with our parents, youth, volunteers, and greater community,” says BBBSEMO CEO and President Becky Hatter.

“This anniversary is a special milestone honoring the many deep commitments that have brought significant improvements in youth outcomes. It’s an exciting occasion to appreciate the many people who’ve made our work possible,” Hatter says. “And getting to look back on these 20 years with everyone who powered this effort is going to be great fun. We’re looking forward to reminiscing and reimagining together.”

Content celebrating the Cape Girardeau Big Brothers Big Sisters office will post to BBBSEMO’s social media channels and www.bbbsemo.org/cape-20 a dedicated page on its website. Commemorative events starting with surprise “Thank You Squad” deliveries will begin Thursday, September 24. For more details, contact Ashley Seiler by email (aseiler@bbbsemo.org) or phone (573-986-9105).

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri (BBBSEMO)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri serves youth and community since 1914. With over 1,400 active matches in its one-to-one mentoring program, youth outcomes are improved. Its one-to-many initiatives broaden the scope of service and include the ABCToday initiative in 19 schools; its Big Futures program serving alumni Littles ages 18-25; and its community-gathering space at Anew. The agency supports children and families in St. Louis City and County; St. Charles and Jefferson Counties; and Cape Girardeau and Scott Counties. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri is a proud member of the United Way. For more information, contact Miya Norfleet (email - media@bbbsemo.org, phone - 314-255-3444) or visit www.bbbsemo.org.