



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
*Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



**December 5, 2008 – Importance of Mentoring**

Denise McCann is the Youth Service Bureau Division Director of Community Based Programs.. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

The Big Brother Big Sister mentoring program operates under the simple premise that one caring adult can have a significant positive impact on the life of a child. This simple premise can have profound and lasting effects for children, and for the community. As a Community That Cares supported program, Big Brothers Big Sisters has research to back up its effectiveness. This program helps increase protective factors for children in Centre County while also decreasing risk factors. And we know that mitigating these risk factors, while also increasing protective factors, is what keeps kids out of trouble and helps them succeed.

Research tells us that when implemented appropriately, mentoring works. Studies show that youth matched with a “big” were 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 52% less likely to skip school, and 27% less likely to use alcohol. Additionally, 64% of youth developed a more positive attitude towards school and 58% achieved higher grades in social studies, math, and languages. But proof goes beyond the research. Proof is seen in the face of a child when he greets his big brother after school, in a conversation we have with the teacher who notes positive behavior changes in a student who is matched with a big, in the parent who tells us her child is no longer getting in trouble since joining the program, or in the college acceptance letter received by a young person who never before would have dreamed of going to college.

Take the story of Andy. Andy’s mother is blind and his father is suffering from a chronic illness and is wheelchair bound. Andy’s older sister is failing all her classes and is constantly getting in trouble at home and in school. Andy, although well behaved in school, also struggles with his grades. Andy was matched with big brother, Matt, and over the first two months, slowly began opening up to his big brother. Changes were noticed in Andy’s self-confidence and his school attendance improved greatly. Four months after the pair were first matched, Andy’s teacher came to us, reporting that he was getting B’s in every class. She also told us that he speaks frequently of his big brother and it’s clear that a positive connection has been made.

Mentoring has been recognized as one of the most promising ways to reach youth and help them achieve their full potential. Most people can’t name the past five Presidents of the United States, the World Series MVP, or the last Nobel Peace Prize winner. But each of us can name that one person who helped us over that hurdle, that person who believed in us and helped us envision the person we were capable of becoming. Our program needs caring adults to spend time with kids and be that important presence in their lives.

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*  
*Serving State College Area School District*  
Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer  
814-861-7424  
dtaylor105@gmail.com  
Web address: [carecentreregion.org](http://carecentreregion.org)

Centre County *Communities That Care*  
*Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and*  
*Philipsburg-Osceola*  
Elizabeth Eckley, Community Mobilizer  
814-404-9511  
[centrecountyctc@yahoo.com](mailto:centrecountyctc@yahoo.com)  
Web address: [centrecountyctc.org](http://centrecountyctc.org)