

## CEO CORNER FOR AUGUST 2008

### “A TIME OF CHANGE: ANYONE CAN SERVE”

By Lowell Perry, Chief Executive Officer

Much work is yet needed to be done in order to effectively improve educational attainment opportunities for all of our citizens. Success in this area will not happen because of “No Child Left Behind.” Our neighborhoods will not be safer due solely to flashing blue lights and a badge. Nor will a proliferation of weigh loss videos and fad diets alone deal effectively with the alarming increase in childhood obesity in our communities. The impetus for change, my friends, has to begin with each of us.

There are certainly many things which are attributable to past policies and discriminatory institutional practices that remain imbedded in our society, creating an unlevel playing field to this day that the public sector has to play a major role in fixing. However, lasting change can only occur when people like you and I stand up and take action as a critical part of a citizen-based solution to the challenges facing this country. We must “be the change we want to see in the world,” as Gandhi said. For those of us who have been hesitating, now is the time to get in the game.

Do you get as frustrated as I do by the fact that most of the much hyped “special reports” we see on television and read in our newspapers, while interesting in their content, rarely address potential solutions? This is where mentoring comes in. An independent study on the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring model found that after 18 months of one-to-one mentoring, kids were 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 52 percent less likely to skip school, and one-third less likely to engage in a violent act. Wouldn't you agree that statistics like these illustrate part of the solution to improving education, safety, and health for all of us?

The hardest part is not convincing people that their services are needed, but simply getting them to actually take the first step towards volunteering. Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is changing how are children are growing up in America and we need your help in many ways. You can:

- Sign up to be a big brother or big sister.
- Refer a friend to get involved by sending them to [www.mentorakid.org](http://www.mentorakid.org).
- Consider serving on a board or a committee.
- Help raise money to support the organization's growth.
- Facilitate a BBBS staff presentation to your business, place of worship, professional organization or group.

- Educate our legislators and your neighbors that BBBS is achieving a positive difference in the quality of life we enjoy in our communities through one-to-one mentoring, and is therefore worthy of their investment of time, talent, and treasure.

Doing nothing is not a viable option. Doing nothing means we are contributors to the challenges we are trying to solve. As I said in the last CEO Report, it is ordinary folks who become extraordinary through their actions. Lest you feel you are not equal to the task of placing a hand on the shoulder of a vulnerable young person, consider the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

*“Everyone can be great, because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.”*

Will you choose to serve?