



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Get Involved: Gen STL

Preserve the future of St. Louis by keeping its youth on the right track.

BY EMILY BARLEAN

> For many, summer is all about pool time, Cards games and backyard barbeques, but for much of St. Louis' youth, these types of activities are a luxury—not the norm. Instead, underprivileged kids face boredom, trouble and learning loss in the summer months. Luckily, these three local organizations exist to keep kids busy, providing them with positive activities and influences during the summer and throughout the year. Read on to find out how you can be one of these positive influences and help preserve the future of St. Louis' youth.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

You may not consider shooting hoops, playing video games or baking cookies to be “volunteer work,” but these are exactly the types of activities encouraged when you become a mentor for Big

Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri (BBBS). Bigs, as the organization fondly calls its mentors, get to act like kids again—and give less fortunate children the support and attention they need growing up.

BBBS has been creating friendships between young people and volunteers since 1904 — simply by providing opportunities for them to hang out. And with 1,900 participants locally, there's no shortage of Littles in need of a friend. Bigs are asked to commit to a minimum of one year and spend four to six hours, two or three times per month, with their Little. And while a few hours a month may not seem like a lot, the numbers don't lie. A study in 2009 reported that Littles who were part of the program for a year or more achieved higher grades, improved at expressing feelings and had higher levels of self confidence. Who wouldn't want to make that substantial of an impact, all while hanging out with a cool little kid? Visit bbbs.org for more info.

URBANFUTURE

If educational and career-focused mentoring is more your game, UrbanFUTURE is where it's at. The organization has been helping the young adults of St. Louis see and believe in their potential for the past 13 years. Whether your talents lie in mentoring, tutoring or career exploration, you'll be a key player in connecting local young adults with their schools, communities and families to ensure their personal and professional success.

UrbanFUTURE volunteers help students set a vision, establish goals and provide the maximum amount of support needed to grow. And growth is exactly what will happen—a five-year report found that most students in the program read two to three grade levels higher and elevated their GPAs more than a full letter after just one year. So, don't wait: Contribute to the successful tomorrows of St. Louis' young adults today. Visit urbanfuturestl.org for more info.

MENTOR ST. LOUIS, A PROGRAM OF HERBERT HOOVER BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

When Mentor St. Louis and Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club joined forces in 2009, the two cause-worthy organizations formed an impressive mega-partnership with three volunteer sites, two state-of-the-art community learning centers and five schools—all with the collaborative goal of educating and inspiring St. Louis' next generation to be all they can be.

With more than 3,500 local kids ages 6 to 18 currently enrolled, volunteers have the opportunity to be much more than an after-school mentor. By joining the effort, you'll promote a positive self-image and act as a role model to help kids succeed in school, stay healthy, explore career choices and pursue interests in sports and the arts. Fun is also a requirement. With activities ranging from theater and outdoor fun to dancing and jewelry making, the volunteer experience promises you'll never be bored. Visit hhbhc.org for more info.

Photo courtesy of Big Brothers Big Sisters.