



Invest in the Future: Gulf Coast Mentoring Programs



AMIkids



Big Brothers Big Sisters



Big Brothers Big Sisters

by Heidi Travis

"I believe the children are our future"

Teach them well and let them lead the way

Show them all the beauty they possess inside

Give them a sense of pride"

Whitney Houston famously sang these lines in her hit "Greatest Love of All." But it isn't just a sappy 80s ballad. Quite literally, children are the future cornerstones of our communities and the time and care we invest in them makes all the difference in the world. Unfortunately, not every child is afforded the same opportunities in life. In our own communities, there are broken homes and troubled children who just need a little extra support.

That's where we come in.

Here in Pensacola there are a number of youth mentoring organizations who take children like these under their wings and work hard to give them the care and support that they need in order to live happy, successful, productive lives. These programs provide assistance in a multitude of ways and strengthen our communities by reaching out to its smallest, most needy members to build them up so that they can achieve their full potential.

Here are just a few of the organizations working hard and changing kid's lives for the better in our community.

AMIkids Pensacola

640 Roberts Ave # 3780, Pensacola
850.453.7490

AMIkids Pensacola has been operating in the community since 1991, serving more than 3,300 at-risk youth. Through community volunteers, including the University of West Florida, mentoring activities focus on peer-to-peer counseling, life skills, tutoring/GED preparation and even gardening.

AMIkids is a non-profit organization dedicated to working with youth who come from troubled backgrounds and have committed offenses in the past. The organization's roots date back to the 1960s when Juvenile Court Judge Frank Orlando of Fort Lauderdale saw a disheartening trend of repeat offenders coming through his court room at an alarming rate. Determined to break the cycle of incarceration, Judge Orlando contacted a friend, Bob Rosof, who ran a research program for Florida Atlantic University and together they conducted an experiment. Judge Orlando sent Rosof a number of boys to aid him with his research. The idea was that these boys would stand a better chance of rehabilitation if they were given a purpose rather than locked in cells. Working with Rosof, the boys had the opportunity to build relationships, and to put their energies and skills into something meaningful that would make a difference in the community and their lives.

Today, the organization has served over 136,000 nationwide. Their vision remains crystal clear: Every child is born with potential. Every child has the potential for a bright future, regardless of their past. AMIkids' approach is multi-

faceted. The youth in this program are given numerous academic opportunities as well as vocational training in areas of their choice. With a focus on education, behavior modification, treatment, and vocational education they work with kids to pave a path towards success.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida

1149 Creighton Road Suite #1, Pensacola
850.433.5437

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida has served the Pensacola area for over 28 years. They are a non-profit organization whose mission is to aid troubled children, typically from single-parent homes, and to provide guidance and one-on-one support.

Big Brothers Big Sisters pairs an adult mentor, a Big, with a specific child, a Little, for monthly outings and activities they can enjoy together.

There are numerous mentoring opportunities offered through Big Brothers Big Sisters to accommodate every need. Bigs may mentor their littles in the community, in their schools, or as a duo, partnering with another Big. Furthermore, Big Brothers Big Sisters also has a couple of more specialized programs including the School to Work program which allows Littles to shadow their Bigs in the work place for four hours a month and, more recently, the Bigs with Badges initiative which pairs Littles with Bigs who serve in law enforcement. Underpinning each of these initiatives and what lies at the heart and soul of Big Brothers and Big Sisters is the relationship between the Bigs and their Littles and the community at large.



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