

This is Amy Weed of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast with a Community Comment on KINS.

I see many successful youth rising up in our community. You know the kid's I'm talking about. From athletics to academics and everywhere in between, so many kids in Humboldt excel. If you are from here you may have experienced growing up with coaches, teachers, parents and caring adults standing by your side rooting you on. These local kids have the potential to go far all because of the support system already in place for them.

I'm not here to talk about those kids though. What I'd like to talk about is the children that fall out of the spotlight and never get the chance to experience a round of applause. They may or may not have a cheerleader in their life. Maybe they have a parent, a grandparent or a guardian (or any of these plurally too), but perhaps their one person can't give them enough or show them how to reach for the stars.

That's where mentoring comes in, a stable adult reaching out to uplift and encourage a child facing difficulties. An unstable home. A parent missing from their life, sometimes two of them. Incredible peer pressure. Bullying. Food insecurity. Lack of confidence. Kids now days are up against a lot, you can't deny that.

The mentor is a kind friend, a knowing adult and an outside presence in their tough world. I am a board member with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the North Coast so I get to glimpse into the mentoring relationships. It's wonderful to hear that the "matches" (as we call our paired adult and child) went fishing/biking/skating or if they simply watched a movie together. This child had 1 on 1 attention that both uplifts and gives them a boost of self-worth.

January is National Mentoring Month. It's an opportunity for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast to thank all of their past and present volunteer mentors who have made a difference in the lives of over 4000 children in Humboldt County in the past 45 years.

The mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported 1-to-1 relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

The need for mentors will surely never go away. What is required is action by suitable adults willing to step in and BE present in a child's life. Recruitment is ceaseless. Think of how many hours you wile away each week. Could they be instead invested in a child's future? Adulthood is imminent, could you help shape them into EMPOWERED, CONFIDENT and ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTING adults?

I like to think I'm preparing for a mission like this.. Soon will come the day where I transition from dutiful board member by hanging up my nametag. I will then devote my energies into supporting a Humboldt County youth in whatever way they require! So a child can get the pleasure of hearing a round of applause someday, be it from a crowd or someone like me who just wants to see "All children achieve success in life" - that is the BBBSNC vision.

Do me a favor, look at your schedule and see if you could squeeze in positive relationship, one with productive outcomes. If that's not possible at this time another way people participate is by volunteering at events or the most common way to assist the cause is by forming a team for Bowl for Kid's Sake which is coming up on March 6th & 7th.

In closing, if you have a mentor it's a good time to reach out and thank that person. Maybe they never knew what they did for you. Now what can you do to pay it forward?

This has been Amy Weed of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the North Coast with a Community Comment on KINS.