

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CENTRAL PLAINS, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2020



President's Report 2020 - Jan Halmarson

My 2019 report ended with the statement that I was hopeful for a calmer, productive year for BBBS Portage in the year to come.

In retrospect, it seems I was rather naïve. That being said, our staff has had a productive year. It has meant changing gears constantly and instituting new policies and coming to grips with the reality that nothing is as it was. I would be remiss in not commending them for their commitment, creativity and devotion to the BBBS and the folks involved in the program. When possible, Littles and Bigs have “met” and have benefitted from their interactions. We are learning that this is so important to kids in times of stress.

At our AGM last year, we voted to change our name to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Plains to better reflect the geographic area where we offer our programs. I am happy to say that the change has been made and the new signage appears on all our materials.

As a Board, we made a decision to streamline our goals this year considering the circumstances. This meant that we chose to work on a few goals that were utmost in priority for the year. Again, Dawn's use of these goals in all our communications has kept those goals top of mind.

When the pandemic arrived last March, as a Board we had grave concerns about how we would survive financially especially as time went on and we were forced to cancel all of our major fundraisers. Thankfully, we are blessed with donors who recognized our plight and stepped up with donations. Additionally, we are grateful for the support we have received through both federal and provincial aid programs. The federal programs were administered through United Way Central Plains and the Community Foundation of Portage & District. We were fortunate, also, to receive support from local businesses. Mr. Mike's held a drive-thru lunch for us that was really successful. MCC, our perennial supporters, gave us another special day and we were the recipients of Portage RONA's Heroes fund. Dawn and Laura explored and developed a virtual fundraiser 'Sip Support Survive' to be held in the 2021 year. Despite our initial fears, we know we are fortunate to be able to say that we are OK financially at the moment.

We have been fortunate to have two new Board members join us. I know that Shasta St. Louis and Rhonda Lyle bring loads of experience, talent and enthusiasm to our Board.

In December, we were all devastated by the sudden death of our fellow Board member, Auna Marie Brown. Auna had been a Board member for over 14 years. Her dedication to BBBS was unwavering. She did whatever was needed to make BBBS successful from selling tickets at local stores, to baking, to raising over \$1000 each year at Bowl for Kids – all with a sense of humour and stories. Her background in volunteering made her an excellent President – twice. I am happy to report that in May, a fund in Auna's name will be initiated with the Community Foundation of Portage & District that will benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters. We hope that in this way, we can honour Auna's dedication to us and our community.

In rereading this report, I have realized, it is a “grateful” report. I am grateful for the support we have received in so many ways. I am grateful to my fellow Board members who show their dedication and support whenever and wherever it is needed. I am most grateful to Dawn and Laura. I think we all recognize that they are the strength of this organization. They make all the good things happen for the kids, families and volunteers. How fortunate are we!

I also need to acknowledge two Board members who are leaving us after 6 years.

Dennis Brownlee joined BBBS reluctantly. He was unsure that he would fit in with the “touchy-feely” sorts that were on the Board. Dennis, you were an excellent fit. I have admired your intelligence, your business acumen, your willingness to share your opinions, and your ability to laugh at yourself. You were always there whenever we needed you. I will miss you. If these were different times, I would be giving you a very big hug!

Cathy Pedden joined the Board after listening to me whine about needing Board members. Cathy, you have been an amazing addition to the Board. You were never afraid to get involved – even becoming President after only a few months on the Board! The energy you have brought to whatever task you accepted has inspired everyone around you. Your “can do” attitude, creativity, intelligence and questioning mind have benefitted all of us at BBBS. I will miss you.

In closing, I am hopeful for a year that brings an end to the fear of Covid and a return to person-to-person interactions which will make a difference in all our lives.



Executive Director's Report – Dawn Froese

In my 2019 report the first line read, “2019 was a year of change”, little did I know that 2020 was the real year of change and of pivoting as Covid hit and restrictions came, went, reinstated, able to do some things and unable to do others. Always reading attempting to understand and to give sound advice to matches and staff. How will matches continue to connect? How can we support them? How do we raise funds when we can't be together? What is going to happen to this agency? So many questions and decisions ran through my mind that sometimes I joked it was going to explode.

By year's end you will see that thanks to the awesome community we are doing well financially. We have been able to access some emergency grants and others. Donors have thought of us and donated, people and businesses alike have been generous. We cannot thank you enough, because of you youth have been able to be matched, and existing matches have been able to continue being supported. Thank you.

Some matches transitioned well to online mentoring, others used the phone and still others struggled. When restrictions were lifted, matches were encouraged to meet outside and to not be in the same vehicle. Masks were to be worn and matches to only meet if everyone was comfortable. There were months when no one could meet except virtually or by phone. We recognize how it is so important for youth to have someone to talk to during these difficult times and we spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to make mentoring happen and how to support matches through these times.

2020 is over, with Covid still here, we perhaps in some ways are better able to maneuver through 2021. The successes of 2020 could not have happened without Laura Spelliscy, who continues to work hard for the children to have a strong dependable mentor, for our board who learned to meet online and had to make some hard decisions when Covid first hit, and for our great mentors who continued to try to connect with their mentees.

Staff, Board, Families (Mentees), Bigs(Mentors), Donors, Businesses, Community

#WE ARE BIGGER TOGETHER

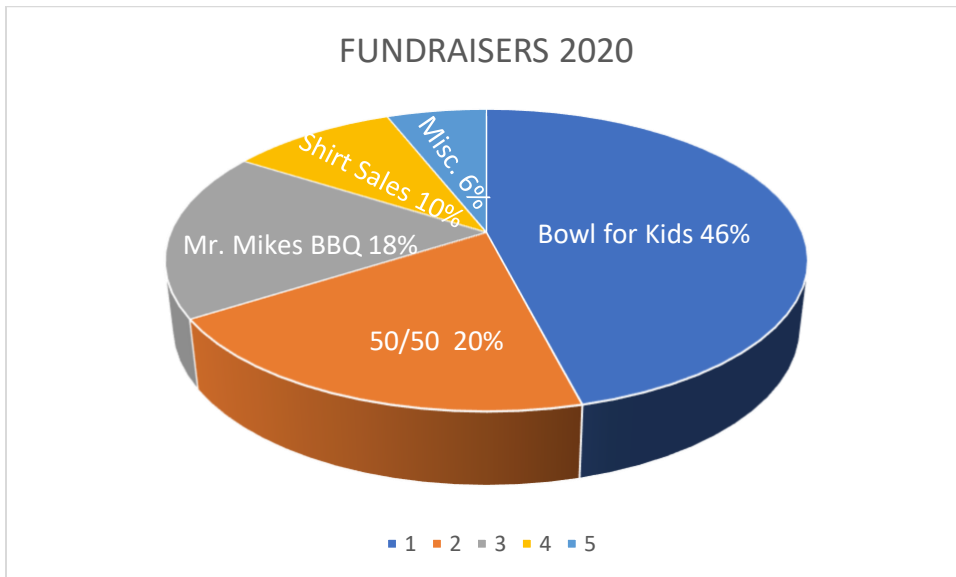
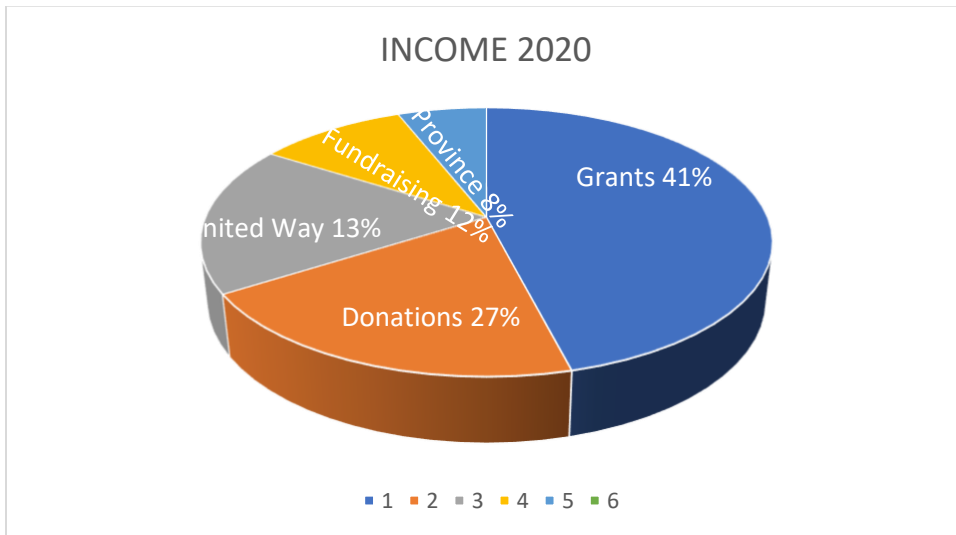


COMMITTEE REPORTS

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITTEE:

- 2 new Board members were added to the board
- Board & ED Evaluations were complete
- New policies: Pandemic Policy
- Reviewed: Financial Policies, By-Laws, Risk Manual, Succession Plans, Crisis Management Plan, Strategic Action Plan, Marketing Plan.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE:



Thank you to:

Rona for choosing Big Brothers Big Sisters for Lowe's Heroes

Mr. Mikes for Drive Thru BBQ

MCC Day for making it happen

Government of Canada through United Way Central Plains – Emergency Funding

Government of Canada through Community Foundation of Portage & District – Emergency Funding

Province of Manitoba – Emergency Funding

Amanda Lavineway -Pampered Chef

PROGRAM COMMITTEE:



Site Based Mentoring includes: In School Mentoring, After School Mentoring

Site Based Group includes: Go Girls, fuse-post secondary education and career readiness

Community Based includes: Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Big Couple

Community Based Group includes: Big Bunch

Highlights:

- 64 children mentored
- Communities of: Portage & RM, Oakville, Gladstone, MacGregor, Elm Creek
- Began fuse=post-secondary education and career readiness program. Ran a winter program that ended a week early due to Covid. Tried a fall program but things were too chaotic with schooling and Covid it was decided to push it off until January 2021

Challenges: Covid, putting matches on hold, matches trying to connect virtually or by phone, not being allowed in MacGregor and Gladstone the fall of 2020 and not allowed to try virtually mentoring with the matches. Again, due to Covid not a lot of volunteer enrolment.

