

YOP Success Stories

As shown by the outcome data in the annual report, numerous organizations, using YOP as a tool, are implementing projects to help at-risk youth become productive adults. Lutheran Family and Children's Services and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Kansas City are two organizations successfully using YOP tax credits to cultivate new donors, increase reach and capacity, and contribute in a very real way to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth. The following summaries demonstrate the ways in which these agencies are making positive, lasting differences in the lives of Missouri's most at-risk youth.

Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri (LFCS)

Who They Are

Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri (LFCS) has been in existence since 1868, when it was founded as a residence for children left homeless after the Civil War. One hundred and fifty years later, LFCS provides an array of services in their St. Louis, St. Charles, Columbia, Cape Girardeau, Springfield, and Franklin County locations. These services include: safe, stable, and loving families for children through adoption and foster care, as well as pregnancy and parenting programming. Additionally, the organization meets the mental, emotional, behavioral needs of clients by providing individual, family, and school-based counseling, evidence-based mentoring, prevention programs, and affordable early childhood education.

What They Do

With the assistance of YOP credits, LFCS provides free prevention and intervention education programming facilitated by skilled social services professionals. These programs provide evidence-based curricula in school, after school, and during the summer to engage youth in activities that increase positive life skills and decrease the likelihood of risky behaviors. Modules include character education, anger management, conflict resolution, bullying identification and avoidance, identifying and maintaining healthy relationships, drug, alcohol and tobacco use prevention, and social competency. In the last year, LFCS has mentored and provided life skills to over 3,000 at-risk youth to help empower them for future success.

Through the organization's current YOP project, LFCS is set to meet the following outcomes:

- **At least 175 of 200 at-risk youth participating in violence prevention/conflict resolution curriculum will successfully complete a curriculum series and demonstrate increased knowledge.**
- **At least 1,600 out of 2,000 at-risk youth will successfully complete a substance use prevention program, demonstrate increased knowledge, and enhanced decision-making and resistance skills.**

Who They Serve

As part of this YOP project, LFCS serves at risk youth ages 5-19 years in the St. Louis City and St. Louis County area. The at-risk youth served are primarily minority youth who come from areas with high crime rates and underperforming schools. Additionally, the youth served face additional risk factors such as:

- **Low socioeconomic status/poverty;**
- **Prevalence of drugs, alcohol and firearms in the community;**
- **Academic failure/low school performance;**
- **Separation from parent/low parent involvement; and**
- **Antisocial or socially disoriented attitudes and beliefs.**

These risk factors put the youth at increased risk to engage in violent behavior, drop out of school, and/or abuse alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. The programs and curricula utilized by LFCS have been nationally recognized by organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education as effective, and have been proven to help prevent negative outcomes for at-risk youth.



STEVEN'S STORY

Steven began receiving services from LFCS when his third grade teacher expressed concerns about disruptive and negative behaviors in the classroom that were interfering with his learning. Steven demonstrated impulsive behaviors, had trouble accepting consequences, and did not understand how his behaviors contributed to those consequences. By meeting with Steven, the LFCS staff facilitator was able to demonstrate appropriate anger management and decision-making techniques, as well as discuss self-esteem. During his sessions, Steven learned to identify triggers for his anger and use his decision-making tools to help make better choices when he felt upset. By practicing activities to improve his self-esteem, Steven was able to learn what he valued, which helped motivate him to be successful in the classroom. By the end of the following quarter, Steven achieved the goals he set for himself and his teacher reported that his classroom behavior had improved significantly. Steven's self-confidence also improved allowing him to enter and win the third grade spelling bee!

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

Kansas City, Mo

Who They Are

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Kansas City (BBBSKC) has grown rapidly since its inception in 1965. BBBSKC has served over 40,000 at-risk youth since its beginning and now serves over 1,750 at-risk youth annually. The organization provides youth with impactful, professionally supported one-on-one relationships with mentors that help the youth gain confidence, leadership skills, and a steady role model. In addition to mentorships, BBBSKC provides support to parents to connect them with resources to improve their own situations. The organization has been named the Big Brothers Big Sisters national “Agency of the Year” four of the last six years.

Who They Serve

BBBSKC serves at-risk, school aged children in the Kansas City area who live in single parent or non-traditional homes. The children served by BBBSKC face many risk factors. Historically, 84% are eligible for free or reduced lunches, 80% are born to parents with a high school equivalency or less, 65% live below the poverty line, and 13% have been in contact with the juvenile court system. BBBSKC currently has over 1,400 active matches in their service area (which extends through Jackson, Johnson, Platte, and Clay counties), and added 150 new matches as a result of their last YOP project.

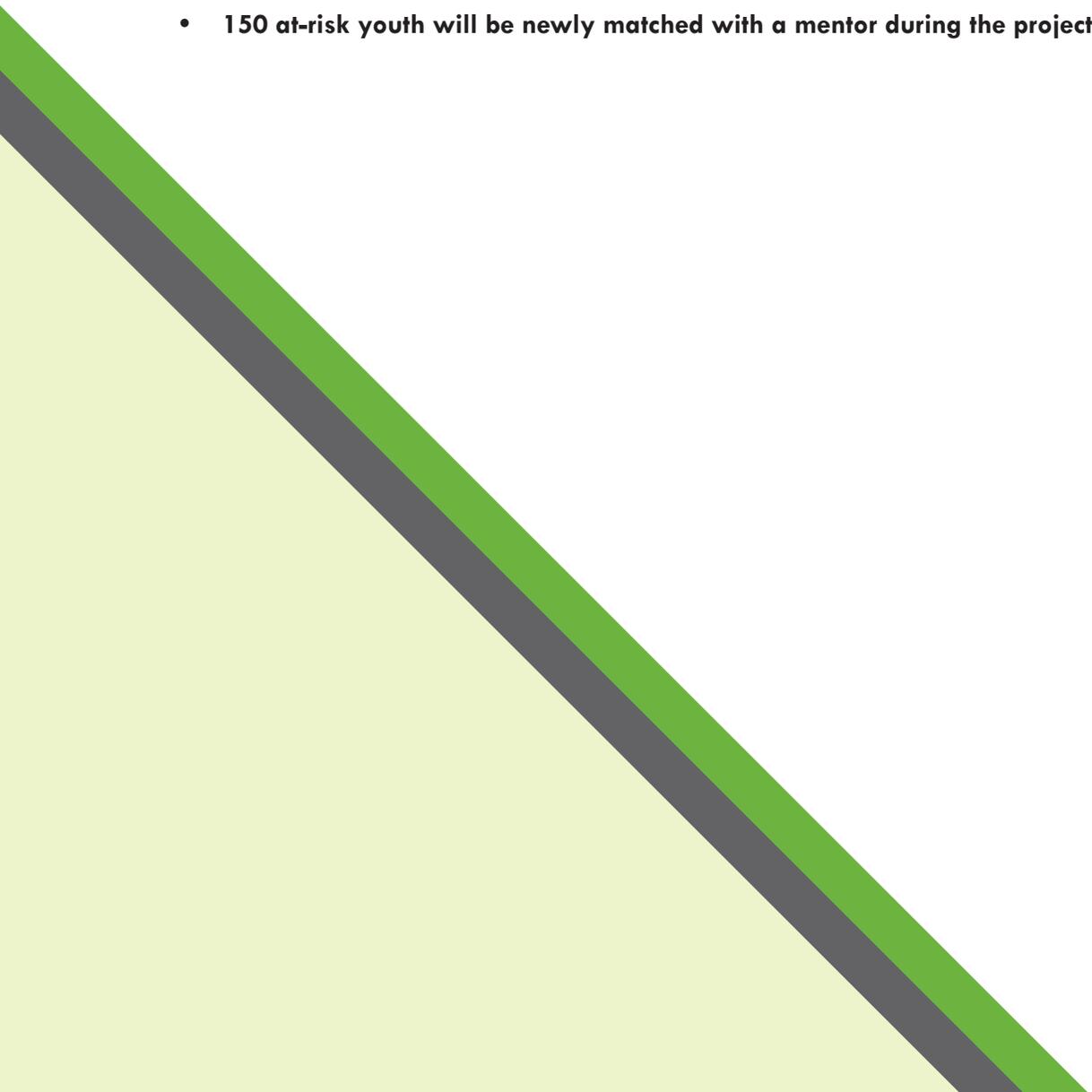
What They Do

BBBSKC utilizes a mentorship model that has been proven successful. Case managers help pair children with a mentor using a system of assessments for potential Bigs and Littles that help ensure a great match, and then continue to support the relationship throughout its duration. Matches last a minimum of one year, but often last many years. BBBSKC also partners with area schools to provide high school focused mentorship programming to ensure improved academic performance.

The organization's data shows that of youth participating in programing:

- **47% are less likely to commit a crime and get involved with the youth juvenile system;**
- **96% reported no alcohol or drug misuse;**
- **70% of youth improved their overall attitude towards school; and**
- **71% improved their grades.**

With the support of YOP tax credits, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Kansas City will achieve the following outcomes:

- **380 of 400 at-risk youth enrolled in the program will be on track to proceed to the next grade and report improved academic performance and attitude toward school since being paired with a mentor.**
 - **340 of 400 at-risk youth participating in the program will report no Juvenile Court contact since being matched with an adult volunteer.**
 - **150 at-risk youth will be newly matched with a mentor during the project period.**
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Anthony & TJ's Story

TJ, a Big Brother at BBBSKC, has mentored his Little Brother Anthony since they were matched in March of 2015. TJ, an insurance broker and car enthusiast, serves as the president of the Big Impact Group, Big Brothers Big Sisters' Junior Board. Anthony is 14 years old and a freshman at Lincoln College Preparatory Academy. TJ and Anthony enjoy working on cars together, playing card games (speed is Anthony's favorite), attending car shows, and cooking.

TJ and Anthony also set positive goals together to prepare for Anthony's future. These goals include staying out of trouble in school, improving grades, eating healthy, understanding the importance of saving and money management, and developing a strong work ethic and understanding of the correlation between hard work and achieving success. Anthony has said he feels lucky because while Bigs only "have" to spend time with their Little once a month, TJ makes an effort to see him every week, more than some of his family members. Anthony told his mom he is so grateful TJ gives him love, shows him respect, and genuinely cares for him and believes in him. It is clear these two have had a tremendous impact on one another and will continue to strengthen their friendship for many years to come.

