

## **Big Brothers Big Sisters KFL&A adapts operations to expand program delivery**

**Kingston, ON** – It has been a year of intense work for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington (KFL&A). Even through the challenges presented by another year of the pandemic, the agency rose to the task of providing intensive, expanded, and meaningful services. With the support of a \$92,500 Resilient Communities Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the organization has rebuilt service capacity and redesigned program delivery in innovative ways. This grant allowed Big Brothers Big Sisters to hire staff who developed and implemented an adapted operations plan to ensure continued service delivery.

“Congratulations to Big Brothers Big Sisters of KFL&A for receiving this Resilient Communities Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation,” said Kingston and the Islands MPP Ian Arthur. “With the difficulties of the pandemic, the need for youth mentorship has never been more important, so I’m so glad to see that this funding is going to providing essential services through flexible means of delivery. Thank you to Big Brothers Big Sisters of KFL&A for the crucial work you do and continue to do in the face of adverse situations. The services you provide help change lives for the better. Congratulations again and thank you to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for this funding.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters of KFL&A is now equipped to continue operations in Kingston and expand into neighbouring communities. With the support of OTF, the organization adapted its operating plan and repositioned its Kingston agency to support families in nearby areas. The organization has already expanded into Napanee, where it delivers twice-a-week small group mentoring programs in physical activity, sports, arts and science, and healthy relationships for children ages 6-18.

“We heard from families the needs were exceptionally high,” recounts Kylie Filion, Supervisor of Big Brothers Big Sisters of KFL&A. “Children lost their usual support networks, felt lonely, and caregivers struggled with mental health. So we took a hard look at how to redesign and refocus our services in a way that would place our service expertise to immediately support our community’s changing needs. We learned about the needs of families in smaller communities around Kingston, and creatively re-engineered our service model for expansion.”

The agency provided over 3,900 hours of volunteer engagement and worked with more than 120 volunteers, making mentoring available to more than 390 local children and youth. It expanded avenues of support to families, through weekly activity packages, increased virtual engagement, and regular wellness check-ins that openly discussed mental health and healthy practices.

“There is much hard work ahead, to sustain our programs in these new communities,” says Kylie Filion. “We have been receiving child applications for mentors every week, and urge our community to consider volunteering with us. Our need for mentors has never been higher.” For more information on how to become a volunteer and program times, please visit the agency’s website ([kingston.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca](http://kingston.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca)). For more updates, follow the agency’s social media accounts (@bbbskingston).

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada’s leading granting foundations. Last year, nearly \$112M was invested into 1,384 community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario’s non-profit sector. In 2020/21, OTF supported Ontario’s economic recovery by helping non-profit organizations rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Visit [otf.ca](http://otf.ca) to learn more.