



Collective Philanthropy Powered By Women

**Executive Summary 2023
Education Focus Area**

Organization Name: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cumberland & Salem Counties (BBBS)

Organization website: www.southjerseybig.org

County where organization headquartered: Cumberland County

County(ies) being served by proposed project: Cumberland County

Organization Mission: Our mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. Our vision is that all youth achieve their full potential. We partner with parents/guardians, volunteers, and others in the community and hold ourselves accountable for each child in our program achieving: (1) Higher aspirations, greater confidence, and better relationships; (2) Avoidance of risky behaviors; and (3) Educational success.

Organization's Projected Operating Budget 2023: \$821,422.51.

Proposed Project Name: Mentor2.0: A College & Career Readiness Program (Mentor2.0)

Proposed Project Summary:

BBBS will partner with Cumberland Regional High School, to implement the Mentor2.0 program. The program matches high school student mentees with college-educated and career-professional mentors, utilizing an online platform to support the students with preparation for college and a career through weekly, secure technology-enhanced communications and monthly in-person meetings.

Electronic communications and in-person meetings are structured by the Mentor2.0 program curriculum in a classroom setting. It creates a baseline of conversations and experiences as it focuses on relationship building, goal setting, and keeping students on track for career exploration and college planning. Once a month, our mentors and mentees meet for “Chat N Chew” Sessions to continue to strengthen their mentoring relationships and to ensure they are meeting benchmarks for career and post-secondary educational readiness.

Every activity is supervised by the Mentor2.0 Program Manager. The staff member utilizes the Mentor2.0 program platform to launch, monitor, manage, and evaluate the program. Youth Outcome Surveys are utilized to gauge the impact and progress of each mentoring relationship. The ultimate goal is for the student to graduate high school, complete secondary training/education, and gain successful employment in the future.

BBBS is proud to be the only organization that offers the Mentor2.0 program within the state of New Jersey. This is possible, due to the grant the organization received from IMPACT100 SJ in 2019. That initial program is still running strong at Cumberland County Technical Education Center and is now partially funded by the Dean and Zoe Pappas Foundation. We look forward to changing the lives of more high school students as we bring the Mentor2.0 program to an additional school with another grant from IMPACT100 SJ in 2023.

The population we will serve with the Mentor2.0 program is 250 high school sophomores in 2023-2024 in non-one-to-one mentoring programs, 25 high school juniors and 25 adult mentors in one-to-one mentoring relationships during the 2024-2025 school year, and another 250 high school sophomores in non-one-to-one mentoring programs in the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year. Our new partner, Cumberland Regional High School, located in Western Cumberland County, struggles to adequately educate students as it scored in the bottom 50% of all New Jersey schools in areas of reading and math proficiency. Only 38% of students are proficient in reading and sadly, just 10% are proficient in math. Both averages are lower than the New Jersey state average.

The school's percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch is 38%, a statistic that is also below the state average (2021 Public Schools Review). Due to the regional status of the school, Cumberland Regional educates students from seven rural areas. A portion of these students come from places like Fortescue and Cedarville, with alarming statistics like the Fortescue median income being only \$34,028 and 32% of Cedarville children living in poverty. Just 10% percent of Fortescue citizens have a college degree and only 5% have one in Cedarville (U.S. Census). Additionally, some students have no access to high-speed internet, something that was revealed during COVID- 19 school closures. This is an obstacle for optimum communication and completion of homework and it acts as a disconnection to critical college and career resources.

Cumberland Regional students, like most youth we serve, face modern day challenges that affect their ability to stay focused during the school day, limiting their vision for their lives after high school. Some youth are growing up with communication challenges as the only English-speaking member of their family and will be the first to graduate high school or college. These students may lack an optimum support system and more specifically, the individualized attention from someone who has the experience to help build a plan for success after high school. A recent private study conducted by Lumina, confirmed this need for intervention when they discovered that a mere 22% of Cumberland County residents possess a college degree.

BBBS has the tools to help change the outlook for local youth and young adults. We are inspired by the results of the previous IMPACT100 SJ grant that we received for a Mentor2.0 program at Cumberland County Technical Education Center and look forward to bringing the same results to Cumberland Regional High School students.

Planning meetings have already taken place with Cumberland Regional High School personnel. Together with the BBBS leadership team, a timeline has been created for program implementation. The beginning of the 2023-2024 school year will host several planning sessions between BBBS and Cumberland Regional High School personnel as well as several intense student engagement activities with the entire sophomore class. Multiple assemblies will be hosted by BBBS at the high school to introduce the sophomores to the Mentor2.0 program. BBBS staff will then begin recruiting and enrolling mentors and mentees and making Matches for the following

This approach has been carefully designed to ensure a smooth implementation of the program at a new school. BBBS has applied lessons learned from our first year of the Mentor2.0 program in 2019, when we would have benefitted from an extended planning session with school administration and additional engagement time with students.