

# WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER



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To Find out how to become a mentor or how to enroll your child(ren), please contact our Program Supervisor, Sarah Arras, at 845-634-2199 x 4 or email at [sarras@bbbsofrc.com](mailto:sarras@bbbsofrc.com)!

To donate to help support our mission, please visit our donate page at [www.bbbsofrc.com/donate](http://www.bbbsofrc.com/donate)



@big-brothers-big-sisters-of-rockland-county



@BBBSofRC

**"NEVER LET THE ODDS  
KEEP YOU FROM DOING  
WHAT YOU KNOW IN  
YOUR HEART YOU WERE  
MEANT TO DO."**

**H. Jackson Brown, Jr.**



USE THESE HASH-TAGS FOR ALL YOUR BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS:

#BBBSRC #DEFENDERSOFPOTENTIAL #IGNITEPOTENTIAL

## OUR MISSION:

To build and support **one-to-one** relationships to ignite the biggest possible futures for youth.



## GREETINGS FROM GILLIAN, CEO, BBBS

Winter Newsletter, 2020

To all our readers, I wish you a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

This newsletter is your invitation to discover all about us, our work, our staff and our board. Within this page you will find many reasons to visit our website and learn about events, celebrations and commitment to your county's youth.

As Rockland's premier mentoring program, we are proud to offer children and youth living in our community, services encompassing personal skills, career development and opportunities for avoidance of negative influences; not to forget, of course, our expanded Court Ordered Visitation Program to include "Off-Site" Visitation!

This program has now become a standard service to Rockland families and this past year, we served 129 children and youth! What an achievement and what a way to present to you now, our brand new 501© (3) organization "The Rockland Youth Empowerment Center." It is our aim to take the Visitation Program and other adjunct services under the auspices of this organization and we are so very excited about not only the plan to forge ahead but the fact that identifying our services under RYE, leaves us to conduct our 1-1 mentoring program solely as a Big Brothers Big Sisters service.

New initiatives are always being launched since our commitment is to reduce negative behavior patterns with the ability for children and youth to see beyond their personal and academic challenges, try harder to succeed in life, listen to peers with respect and assume responsibility for important choices. Our Big Brothers Big Sisters unique brand of 1 – 1 mentoring program seeks to change the lives of children facing adversity between 7 and 18 years of age with a caring adult mentor in a relationship supported by professional Big Brothers Big Sisters staff members, changing lives for the better forever. Our network of volunteers, donors and supporters comes from all walks of life, all backgrounds, all corners of the county.

We extend a warm welcome for you to remain with us as affirmation that our programming is not only valid for making "a difference" but is justifiable in its outcomes and measurements of service.

Please stay warm and safe until next time – Spring! Oh, lovely Spring

In gratitude,  
Gillian





## “BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF ROCKLAND COUNTY’S OFF-SITE COURT ORDERED VISITATION PROGRAM IS UP AND RUNNING, AND OFF TO A GREAT START!”

Visiting parents appreciate having more local and convenient meeting options for spending time with their children.

For more information contact Saira Vargas, Executive Administrator (845-634-2199 x2).



### MEET THE OFFICE STAFF!



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# 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Recognition

## CELEBRATING HONOREES WHO HELP US HELP THE COMMUNITY OF ROCKLAND!

Friday, November 22, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County celebrated its 35th Anniversary Recognition Dinner and Fundraiser "Celebrating Honorees Who Help Us Help the Community of Rockland!" Opening the evening was a bagpipe processional introducing the honorees followed by the beautiful voice of Marta Rodriguez singing the National Anthem.

BBBS 2019 Honorees were: Bruce Bortniker, Judie Greenstein, Patrick Hogan, The Independent Insurance Agents of Rockland Association, Lenny Spiegel and The Backpacks Foundation. Also honored were distinguished volunteer mentors: Jackie Smalls, Allan Pollack, and Ed Brignoni.

A wonderful time was had by all! The evening included Proclamations from elected officials and, an appearance by the experienced auctioneer, Barry Cherwin who was an act unto himself. Gratitude is extended to all BBBS sponsors, supporters, and attendees!



From left to right: The Hon. Sherri L. Eisenpress, Rockland County Family Court Judge/ Acting Supreme Court Justice, Gillian E. Ballard, CEO of BBBS of Rockland County, The Hon. Harriet Cornell, Rockland County District 10 Legislator, The Hon. William Warren, Retired Family Court Justice, Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee, with 2019 BBBS Honorees Lenny Spiegel and Bruce Bortniker.

Scenes from our 35th Annual Recognition Dinner and Fundraiser: Following a bagpipe processional introducing our honorees, From L to R: Ron Longueira of the Independent Insurance Agents of Rockland Association, Patrick Hogan, Lenny Spiegel of The Duke of Oil and "16 Candles," Bruce Bortniker, and Judie Greenstein.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County honors members of our community who are passionately committed to supporting Rockland County youth. From L to R: Keith Brown, BBBS Board Chair, Gillian E. Ballard, CEO and President, and 2019 BBBS Honorees: Bruce Bortniker, Patrick Hogan, Judie Greenstein, and Ron Longueira.





## PRESENTATION ON OUR ROCKLAND ALIVE MENTORING PROGRAM (RAMP)

This fall has been a busy and productive time for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County! On October 21, Gillian, BBBS CEO gave a well-received presentation on our Rockland Alive Mentoring Program (RAMP) during Camp Venture's Substance Abuse initiative.

Pictured here along with Gillian, are Dr. Christine Davies, Instructor in Nursing at Dominican College and BBBS Board Member Scott Milich.



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## ROCKLAND COMMUNITY HELPING TO SUPPORT AND NURTURE OUR YOUTH

On November 2, Gillian was honored by the Rockland County Police Hispanic Society. Our CEO was recognized at the RCPHS's 24th Annual Dinner/Dance Fundraiser due to her service helping support and nurture Rockland County Youth.

Seen here celebrating with Gillian, is incoming Vice Chair of the BBBS Board, Ed Brignoni.







## HONORED BY THE ROCKLAND COUNTY SALVATION ARMY

After a few weeks to breathe from her previous award, our CEO was also honored on November 14 by the Rockland County Salvation Army at their 13th Annual Awards Breakfast & Red Kettle Kick-Off! At this event, Gillian received The Salvation Army's 2019 "Doing The Most Good" Award.



From left to right: Ed Brignoni, incoming BBBS Vice Chair, 2020; Jennifer Sislin, incoming BBBS Chair, 2020; Gillian E. Ballard, BBBS CEO and BBBS Board Member, Scott Milich.

Gillian E. Ballard, BBBS CEO and Dominick Riolo, Advisory Board Chair, Rockland County Salvation Army

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## RECEIVING A PROCLAMATION HONORING THE MISSION OF BBBS

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County closed out the month of November with our CEO, Gillian Ballard, receiving a proclamation honoring the mission of BBBS, from Clarkstown Supervisor, The Hon. George Hoehmann. Taking place in Mr. Hoehmann's office in attendance for the presentation, are L – R: Long-term Board Member, Scott Milich; BBBS of Rockland County's Chairman of the Board, Keith Brown; Gillian Ballard, BBBS CEO; Clarkstown Supervisor George Hoehmann; John Vitro, Lia Toyota of Rockland and Lee DiPrizito, Moe's Southwest Grill, Nanuet.







2019 GAVE OUR BIGS AND LITTLES GREAT MEMORIES! WE'RE EXPECTING MORE IN 2020!







# BIG BROTHER RAISES OVER \$7K FOR A GREAT CAUSE!

By Jonette O'Kelley Miller

On May 16, 2019, the world was blessed by the arrival of Owen Peter Wallenstein. Owen, however, made his appearance twelve weeks earlier than was expected. His parents, Sarah and BBBS Big Brother Keith, felt like they were on a roller coaster. Keith shared that a natural childbirth can be both exciting and scary at the same time, but having the additional concern of your child being born prematurely can make the experience completely nerve-racking! The highs and the lows are magnified times one hundred!

While caring for their son, Keith and Sarah "lived" in Hackensack Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for almost three months. However, Owen is living up to the meanings of his name: "young warrior," "well born," and "noble." He has proven to be quite a fighter and, thankfully, his life journey is just beginning! According to Keith, the neonatal staff at Hackensack Hospital went above and beyond in taking care of Owen, along with supporting him and Sarah. What they do on a day-in, day-out basis is second to none. Keith states, "The NICU nurses are angels!" Not only do they provide extreme, wonderful care to their tiny patients, they are also sensitive to parents' concerns and wrap both babies and parents in loving and excellent support. It's no exaggeration to say that the NICU staff became Keith and Sarah's extended family.

Because of the exceptional care and concern given to them and to Owen, Keith wanted to find a way to give back to the hospital and the various members the Neonatal Unit. Keith and Sarah first heard about the hospital's NICU Strong Walk fundraiser in early July. When the family was discharged on July 30th, Keith and Sarah started talking about putting a team together for Owen. When asked what ultimately made them decide to participate, Keith shared that he and Sarah considered it a great opportunity to give back and bring awareness to the cause. They also wanted to reconnect with the nurses, doctors and the staff that had supported them and their son.

The day of Hackensack Hospital's "Strong Walk," September 15, 2019, Keith remembers being nervous due to worrying about the weather. However, that Sunday couldn't have been a more beautiful day. Keith, Sarah and Owen arrived early to set up and were expecting only 20 or 30 people - at the most 40. As the day continued, though, people kept coming and coming. Keith remembers even though the walk was short, it was a joyful experience and a day of celebration.

As a Big Brother, Keith has been a mentor to his Little Brother Anthony for a little over four years. He initially became a Big Brother because he thought it would be a "really cool opportunity" to be an advocate and resource for someone who was in need of that kind of support. What he didn't realize was how much of a resource having Anthony in his life would be to him in terms of helping to shape his perspective on things. Keith and Anthony were first matched when Anthony was eleven years old. Now, after 1,460 days later, teenager Anthony and Keith have a bond that's grounded in special memories. Anthony and his mother Marjorie chose to build on those memories by joining with Keith and Sarah as members of "Team Owen." Mother and son were excited because this was their first time meeting Owen.

It turned into a wonderful day full of fun, thanksgiving and the celebrating of life. Keith and Sarah were overwhelmed by and grateful for all the support they received. Team Owen made the hospital's Team Honor Roll by raising \$7,750 for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Plus, the hospital created a new award just for Team Owen because his team was the largest, with over one hundred members.

Last spring, Big Brother Keith chose BBBS of Rockland County as his birthday fundraising charity on Facebook. We continue to be grateful and inspired by Keith's generous heart and service.



Big Brother Keith, his son Owen and Little Brother Anthony



Keith, Sarah and Owen Peter Wallenstein



"Team Owen"



# POTENTIAL

# IS EVERYWHERE



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Big Sisters®**  
OF ROCKLAND COUNTY