

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER



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In This Issue:

- Updates from the CEO
- Meet the Staff
- Congratulations

- Lia Toyota's General Manager luncheon
- Happy Birthday, Baby Owen
- Our Bigs are a Big Deal

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!

To donate to help support our mission, please visit our donate page at www.bbbsofrc.com/donate



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



@BBBSofRC

"NO KID IS UNSMART.
EVERY KID'S A GENIUS
AT SOMETHING. OUR
JOB IS TO FIND IT. AND
THEN ENCOURAGE IT."

Robin Sharma



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.



At-risk children need our help — now more than ever!



It's a heartbreaking fact. Although thousands of boys and girls in our communities are living below the poverty line, we have the resources to serve only about 300 of them. These children have no access to the lifelines we offer, such as our:

- Unique one-on-one mentoring program
- After-school tutorials
- Emergency assistance fund
- Tuesday night basketball games at the Haverstraw Community Center

And these are just a few of our frontline efforts. These are crucial services that these children desperately need, but we have stretched our funding as far as it will go. That's why we are turning to you for help.

With your charitable support, we can bring even more young people from impoverished, single-family homes into the fold – and expand our emergency fund to meet the new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Besides the basic everyday necessities, many children don't have digital devices or even internet service. As a result, they can't connect to online remote classes offered by their schools or to the social services that can help their families through these trying times. So, a portion of the money we raise will help connect these children to these lifelines.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Rockland County has always been about connecting. It's in our DNA. And now, we need you more than ever to help us make those connections. Your contributions will mean the world to these children, literally. And of course, your donations are tax-deductible.

Even after the pandemic passes, the needs of these children will still be there. Please help them by giving what you can.



LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR:

As many of you may have heard, the federal government is extending the voluntary national shutdown to April 30th, as the COVID-19 pandemic increases throughout the U.S.

This shutdown affects so many people but it doesn't mean that we have to stop working and not keep our "business as usual."

During this unprecedented time, we have all been encouraged to adapt to a 'new normal' in many different ways. Our "new normal" may be working virtually, or going to a store and finding that shelves are not as stocked as we would like, or having conversations with friends from a 6-foot distance. No matter what your new norm is, please remember that it is important to adjust the best you can. The precautions can help.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Rockland County is also adapting to our "new normal". We have put a lot of changes in place to allow our Bigs/Littles to continue to virtually see each other.

We have also worked with our national organization and the Rockland County Courts to allow supervised visitations to continue "virtually". Yes, this is different than we have done in the past but the great thing is that we are able to do it and no one will miss seeing their loved ones.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Rockland County, I should like to thank our dedicated team. This team, led by Gillian Ballard, has adjusted to their new normal as well! What hasn't stopped is their commitment to ensuring that everyone they help, continues to be helped.

Wishing you all safety and good health.

Most sincerely,

Jennifer Sislin,

Chair, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County.



GREETINGS FROM GILLIAN

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Well here we are entering the third quarter of 2020 and goodness, what changes have been made to our lives!

Out of abundant thoughts to caution and, after daily reviews of Governor Como's "lockdown" to NY Moving Forward" statements, BBBS is seeing changes in how our community comes together for the greater good of the mental well-being of our county's children and their families. Our top priority is the health and safety of our clients, staff and Board, particularly any of whom who are at higher risk from COVID-19 and, we continue to make resources available to you from our offices, over the telephone and/or via our social media pages.

We all, are very aware of the continuance of avoidance in both remaining free of the COVID-19 contagion itself as well as transmitting the COVID virus. The health and safety of our community is the utmost importance to us as we continue to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID – 19 so at this time of writing, all Intakes for the 1-1 Mentoring program and the Court Ordered Visitation Program are conducted virtually and all program participants meet with their Bigs virtually as do our parents participating in the Visitation Program.

This being the new pattern of programming during this particular time, we have observed that anecdotally, other good factors occur and that one is our Rockland Youth Empowerment Center - has now received its EIN from the Internal Revenue and is registered with the NYS Charities Bureau - so we will be sending out very soon, all the programing that the RYE organization will be administering.

Further, our organization has been awarded PPP funding through the Department for SBA as well as receiving a grant from the Rockland Foundation Community not forgetting that Lia Toyota of Rockland has also confirmed a wonderful gift to us again this year together with First Niagara Bank! Words are unable to express how these funding opportunities lift our morale and encourage us in the continuance of our "essential services."

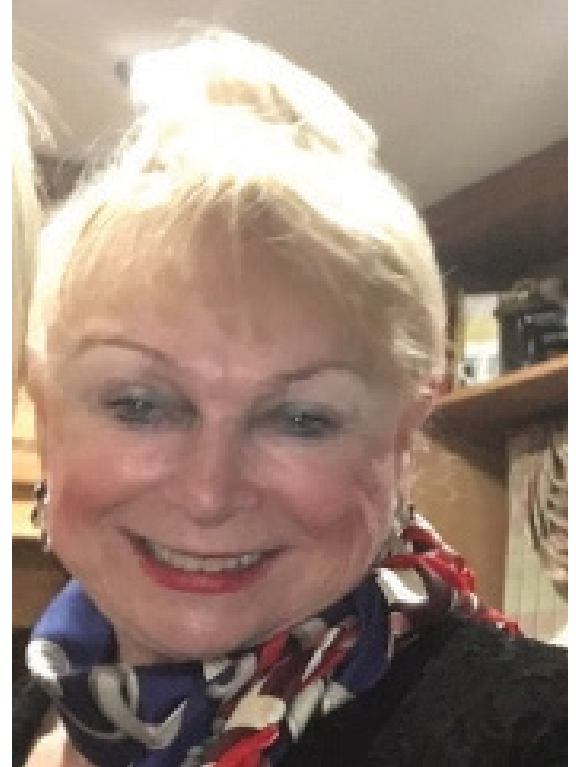
I am always inspired by the work that is going on at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland as we work virtually to make new matches and truly encourage anyone who can spare a few hours a month, to strongly consider getting involved, and help make a real difference in a child's life.

As of now, zoom meetings, trainings and any other professional support is provided each week as our services are on the front-line to deliver mental wellbeing to every child and youth for, as we all know, the body and mind are intertwined. A healthy body, without a healthy mind in a child, creates a disturbed child.

That said, we consistently provide referrals throughout the county in order to fill gaps in our services and to aid families who are experiencing mental difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing that physical, mental, emotional, and the spiritual welfare of children is the key to promoting self-esteem.

If you have any concerns about COVID-19, call the New York State Department of Health's Novel Coronavirus 24-hour hotline at 1-888-364-3065 to speak with a NYSDOH expert who will answer your questions. Please, do not hesitate to call office phoneline and know that we shall respond or email us at: info@bbbsofrc.com.

Wishing you all safety and good health.





TIPS ON SOCIAL DISTANCING AND OTHER PRACTICES TO HELP REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), the WHO (World Health Organization) and other leading health authorities, social distancing is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses. The following are tips to help you practice proper social distancing at work and at home.

Everyone should know of the importance of practicing everyday preventive actions that can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- If it is necessary to go to work or visit a public place, stay approximately six feet or more away from others
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects daily (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles)

How do you disinfect surfaces for the coronavirus disease?

For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

Can you contract the coronavirus disease by touching a surface?

People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

How should I get food?

While food markets remain open and restaurants are available for take-out only (in most locations), the best option is to have your food delivered.

If I do go shopping at a market or pick up food at a restaurant, what additional precautions should I take?

When you get home with your food, you could take it out of the containers, throw those out, and then wash your hands thoroughly before eating.



What about people in good physical shape and under the age of 30?

While the elderly and those with pre-conditions are the most vulnerable, every demographic group (age, background, etc.) is susceptible to contracting the virus, especially if in close contact with others who have the disease or have been exposed. Once again, social distancing should be practiced by everyone.

What about children?

Cases in children tend to be milder. A new study in the journal Pediatrics finds that 13% of children with confirmed cases of COVID-19 didn't show symptoms. Subsequently, children and others with mild or unnoticeable symptoms can often be carriers of the disease.

Should I visit my elderly relative or friend?

Probably not. Older individuals are the most susceptible population. Distancing yourself from elderly people protects your loved one and yourself. However, be aware that social isolation is a concern for people who live by themselves or cannot see others. Make sure to use tools at your disposal to stay in touch with others - phone, social media, video conferencing, etc.

Should I visit outdoor public places like parks and playgrounds? Can I exercise outside?

Only if social distancing can be practiced. Families can stay together, but there should be sufficient distance - six feet or more - from all other people. In general, people may go outside, but should limit their exposure to any public place.

Playgrounds in particular can be places where the virus can be transmitted through clustering or contaminated surfaces. Team sports like basketball, soccer, etc. are also discouraged at this time.

Is it OK to get together with my friends at my or someone else's house?

I know everyone and they are all healthy.

Gathering in groups of just a few people, whether indoors or outdoors, is strongly discouraged. Now is not the time for social groups, parties, get togethers, etc.



MEET OUR STAFF!



Gillian Ballard
President & CEO



Sarah Arras
Program Supervisor



Saira Vargas
Executive Administrator



Anne Nissen
Match Coordinator



Karen Lewis
Data Entry Specialist



Judie Greenstein
Match Support Specialist



Patrice Brenner
Bookkeeper





1-1 PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

by: Sarah Arras

In this time of social distancing it has been heartwarming to connect with our families and hear their stories of virtual meetings and celebrations. Thank you for sharing your personal stories of triumphs over this virus and the grief you have felt at the losses that you have faced during this difficult time.



A number of our parents and Bigs have been heroes during this time working as essential workers in a variety of ways, such as medical providers, nurses, CNAs, social workers, shelter workers, grocery store staff and much more. Our agency wants to thank all of you for your dedicated service at this time.

Also, I want to thank the Bigs, Parents and Littles who attended our virtual support meetings & workshops and shared their ideas to support one another. Our office plans on continuing these meetings and wants to hear from you. Our most recent meeting involved getting input from our Littles on how they like to stay connected with their Bigs at this time.

A special thanks to the following organizations for hosting workshops to support our Bigs and families.

Kim Rodriguez, CRPA, Family Navigator, Certified CRAFT Coach with Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Council of Orange County for her presentation on Positive Communication.

Michelle Kleinman, RDN, CDN, CLC, Rockland County Department of Health for her Presentation on Kitchen Trips & Tricks

If you have a special skill, or creative ways to stay connected during this time, please reach out to me to discuss further details.

One major loss for our agency is not getting to see our Senior Littles graduate from the program in person at the Rockland County Legislature. I have to say - this is my favorite occasion every year, not only for the celebration of our Littles graduating and moving onto college, but to hear how the Match relationships have impacted both the Bigs as well as lives of the Littles. Our office is assembling a senior newsletter and will celebrate each one of these seniors. Thank you for sharing your stories with us.





MATCH COORDINATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

by: Anne Nissen

A great thing I've observed through the pandemic is that the Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers we had "on deck" have said yes when we presented them with potential Little Brothers or Little Sisters -- even though all matches have to start and continue with virtual, not in-person, "outings." The volunteers have asked us to suggest the best ways to use available technology (like FaceTime or Facebook Messenger) in order to build friendships with their "Littles." A generous village helped me and other staff, figure out the answer.



A kind parent walked me through accessing FaceTime. "Bigs" studied online games they had never heard of, let alone played, before; they tackle talking with young children whose faces bounce in and out of the Zoom picture because the kids can't sit still and they do messy projects in their living rooms in tandem with their Littles doing the same messy project at their homes.

Littles may have smiled when I asked them how some program or game works ("So, what is Fortnite?"), but not one of them audibly giggled.

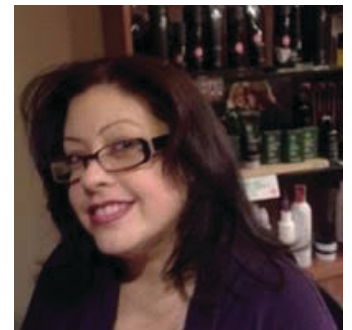
I have also heard of personal and family struggles and sickness, over which I have grieved. Seeing new and existing Bigs and Littles dedicate themselves to making matches work helps a coordinator like me remain hopeful for the future.



COURT ORDERED VISITATION PROGRAM

by: Saira Vargas

Since the mandatory shutdown in the middle of March 2020, our Court Ordered Visitation Program was able to continue its service through the creation and development of virtual visitation between "visiting" parents and their children, by the second week of April 2020 and, currently remains in effect.



It was important for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County to provide parents and children a method of communication so they may continue establishing a healthy and happy relationship

Without this method of communication, the parents and children in our program would have suffered distancing issues, of which the effects would be realized, once "in-person" visitation is reinstated.

To date, we are successfully providing virtual visitation to over many, many families throughout our county. Interested in learning more? Please call me, Saira Vargas at 845 634 2199 x 2.





BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF ROCKLAND IS EXCEEDINGLY GRATEFUL TO LIA TOYOTA OF ROCKLAND FOR ITS CONTINUED GENEROSITY AND SUPPORT.



John Vitro, General Manager, Lia Toyota of Rockland; Gillian Ballard, CEO, BBBS; Carlos Martinez, Executive Director, Bridges; Scott Milich, Board Member, BBBS.



CONGRATULATIONS BABY OWEN YOU ARE NOW ONE YEAR OLD!





CONGRATULATIONS TO ANAHIS & MARIA

Congratulations to Anahis & Maria who were matched this week! Our office sees lots of laughs in the future. We can't wait to hear about their first virtual activity!

BBBS VIRTUAL MATCH MEETINGS



Congratulations to Anahis & Maria!!!



BBBS SUPPORT STAFF HOSTED A BIG AND LITTLE MEET & GREET

BBBS Support Staff hosted a Big and Little Meet & Greet last Thursday, June 19th to share ideas about how Bigs and Littles can communicate creatively during this time of social distancing. It was great to hear the perspective of one of our Littles!





BIG MEGAN & LITTLE AVIANNA

Big Megan & Little Avianna holding her puppy, both wearing their Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County shirt managing through virtual meetings.



BIG TOMMY & LITTLE JOHN

Big Tommy & Little John wearing a Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland County shirt managing through virtual meetings.





CONGRATULATIONS LUCAS AND CINDY!!!

BBBS VIRTUAL MATCH MEETINGS



Congratulations to Cindy & Lucas!!!



CHECK OUT THIS LATEST BIG BROTHER NILE AND LITTLE BROTHER JAY'S CREATION

Check out this latest Big Brother Nile and Little Brother Jay's creation on their virtual match activity. Looks great!!!
Keep your pictures coming everyone. Can't wait to see your creations.

BBBS Virtual Match Outings

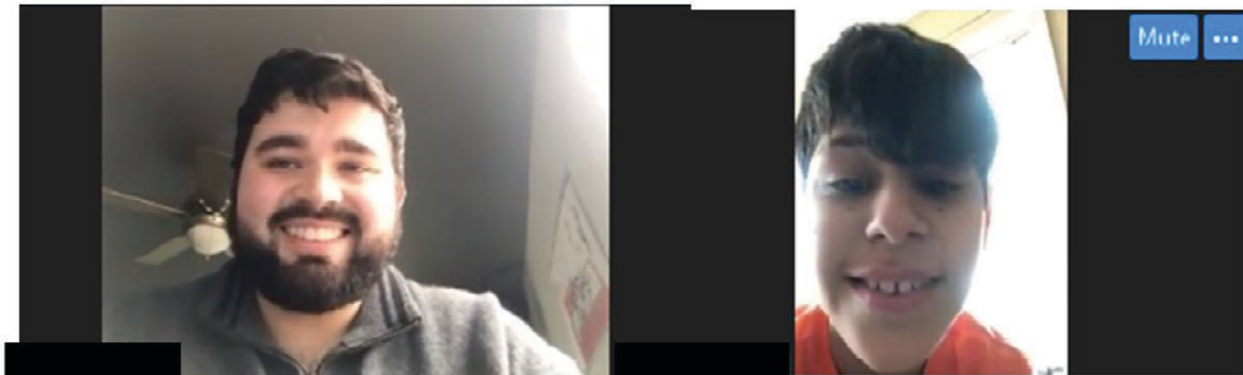
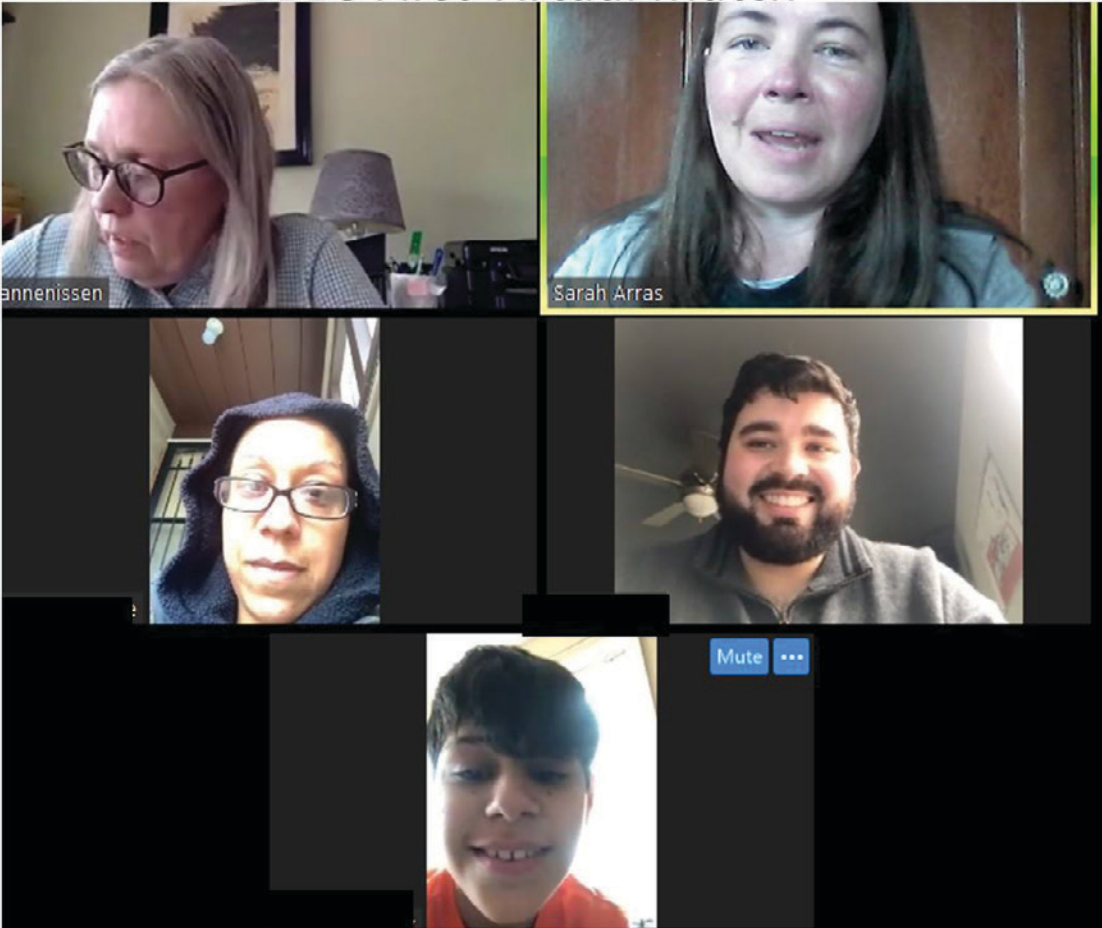




VIRTUAL MATCH

Thank you to Big Brother Nile and Little Brother Jay for being part of our first virtual match. Hope you are looking forward to your first virtual activity! This is a momentous and first-ever occasion in our 35 years of service in Rockland County!

BBBS First Virtual Match

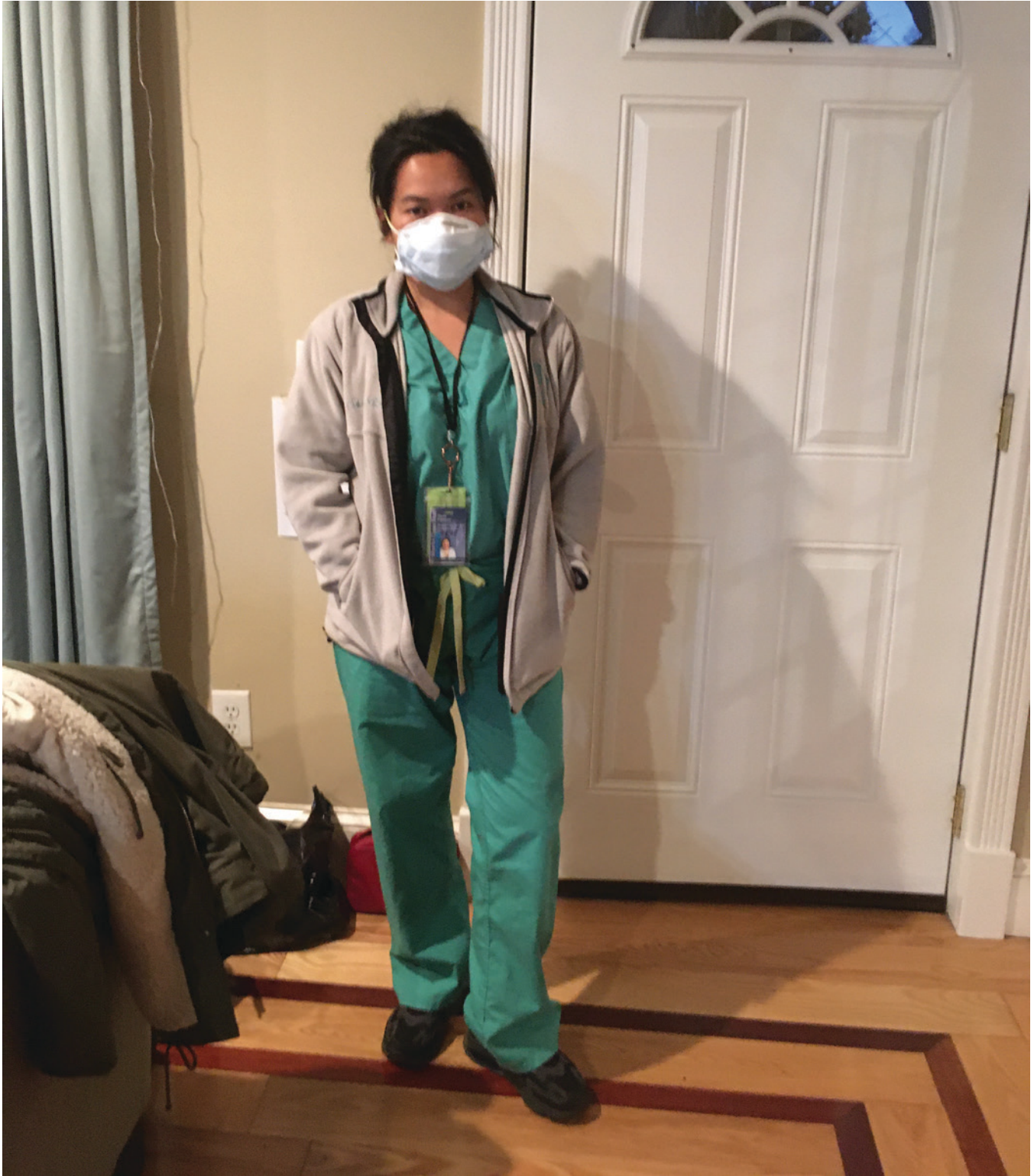


Congratulations Nile & Jay!



THANK YOU TO A LOCAL NURSE AND BIG SISTER SHEILA

BBBS says a very big thank you to Rockland nurse and Big Sister Sheila, for her compassion and caring to those battling this virus!





OUR BIGS ARE REAL HEROES! PLEASE KEEP YOUR STORIES COMING.

Big Thanks to Big Brother Darnel Pierre who continues his work as Culinary Director at the Food Kitchen for the Residents in NYC for the organization Services for the Underserved.



POTENTIAL

IS EVERYWHERE



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters**
OF ROCKLAND COUNTY

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Won't You Be Part ^{of} our Success Story?

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland is a non-profit organization supported through the government of Rockland County, its villages and towns. Federal, state and corporate grants, as well as fundraising, directly supports the children in your community.

When you donate to Big Brothers Big Sisters, you help make a difference in the lives of young people. Your financial support helps us provide programs and services throughout the Rockland community so we can nurture more college graduates, community leaders and entrepreneurs. In addition, your support enables BBBS to:

- offer cultural and social activities to enrich the opportunities and lives of children.
- recruit new Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers.
- cover the costs of background checks, while ensuring trained professionals match Littles to responsible Bigs.
- provide ongoing supervision and relationship support for every Big, Little and Little's family.