

EVERY CONNECTION COUNTS



Dear Big Sisters Community,

I'm sure like many of you, I currently find it difficult to reflect on 2020 with a lot of clarity. However, one thing I am absolutely certain of is the pride I have experienced witnessing the strength of the Big Sisters community.

Mentoring builds resilience and we often challenge our youth to face adversity head-on. As an organization, we could hardly have demanded less of ourselves than we do of others and I am in awe of the dedication the Big Sisters team has shown over the last year.

Our caseworkers immediately increased check-ins with our most vulnerable families, created supports for virtual mentoring and re-imagined group programs. We are now focused on how we can help youth through emerging long-term academic and mental health challenges to ensure that all reach their full potential.

All this would not have been possible without our incredible supporters. As you will read, this year's Luminary Award Soirée was the most successful to date. We were so fortunate to be able to gather virtually to honour six incredible women who have been true champions of Big Sisters for many decades.

Over 60 years, we have seen a lot of change, but know that together we can meet any challenge while continuing to build resilience in youth so they can have the brightest future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hanne Madson'.

Hanne Madson
Executive Director of Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland





WHY MENTORING MATTERS

LIKE BIG, LIKE LITTLE

On the day Shivani graduated from high school, her entire family was there – her parents, sister, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and even cousins. But one other person was there, too, whose presence meant a whole lot to Shivani in a whole other way – her Study Buddy, Heather.

When Shivani was 7 years old, she would turn to her parents for help with her homework. They made themselves as available as possible, but it wasn't easy. Her father was in ongoing rehabilitation as the result of previous back injuries. Her mother worked full time. She was able to help Shivani in the evenings but recognized how her daughter would benefit from having a consistent mentor in her life.

Heather was Shivani's second Study Buddy whom she met when she was 11 years old.

Heather was 28 and had left a demanding career in the restaurant industry. She had been turning to alcohol as a means of coping with the realities of a high stress lifestyle. After much introspection and self-work, she turned herself around and began looking for opportunities to rebuild her life filled with meaningful things. Heather had learned how

to pick herself back up and wanted to impart her new-found wisdom on someone who may benefit.

The Study Buddy program was the perfect fit for them both. "From the get-go we were friends," remembers Heather. Shivani immediately responded to Heather's quick wit and dry humour. Shivani was no stranger to bullying or the fear of opening herself up. But with Heather she found a safe place to be herself. "I take a little bit of pride in her sass," says Heather.

Heather was more than a tutor. She taught Shivani to not be afraid of making mistakes and build the confidence to see passed letter grades – that her education was a way to determine how she wanted to contribute to the world. Shivani also credits Heather for bringing out her compassionate side.

"I adopted the attitude that if I can help I will," she says. "I see a lot of students around me and they don't have that regard for other people."

Over 10 years later, the two are still very much in each other's lives. The relationship should've dissolved after high school. "But I will be there for her wedding, for her baby shower..." says Heather.

To Shivani, all girls would benefit from a mentor – no matter their circumstances. "You don't choose your family – they have to be there," says Shivani. "But Heather chose to be there for me for all those years, and that means a lot." Beyond that is the difference made in the lives of the mentors. "When you consider that the work that's being done is affecting two people and not just one, the ripple effect is doubled," says Heather. "You're impacting not

just one, but two, and everyone they come in contact with."

Shivani is completing her final year at the Sauder School of Business. Her education at UBC is the result of a CIBC scholarship and Peter Abramowich Foundation bursary that Shivani won through Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland. "Big Sisters opened up the biggest door for me which is to go to a big university. But beyond the financial help, they've made me the woman I am today."

"We joke that she's a mini version of me," says Heather. "And if that's true, then I must be doing okay".

"Big Sisters opened up the biggest door for me which [was to attend a] big university... they've made me the woman I am today"
- Little Sister, Shivani

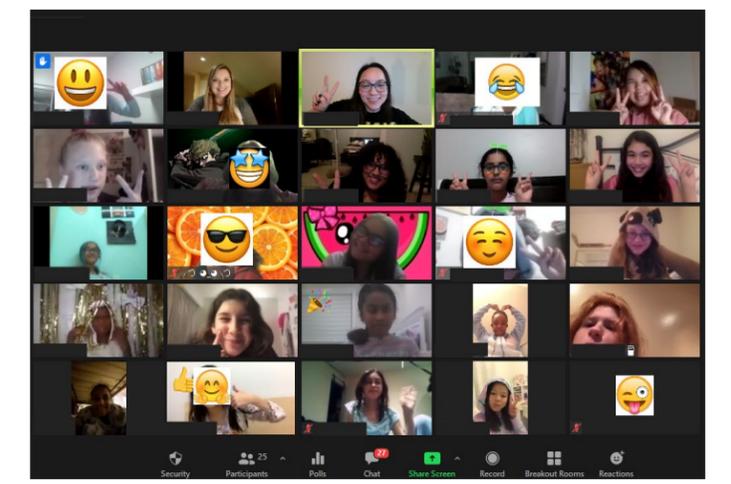


Watch Shivani & Heather's match video story [here!](#)

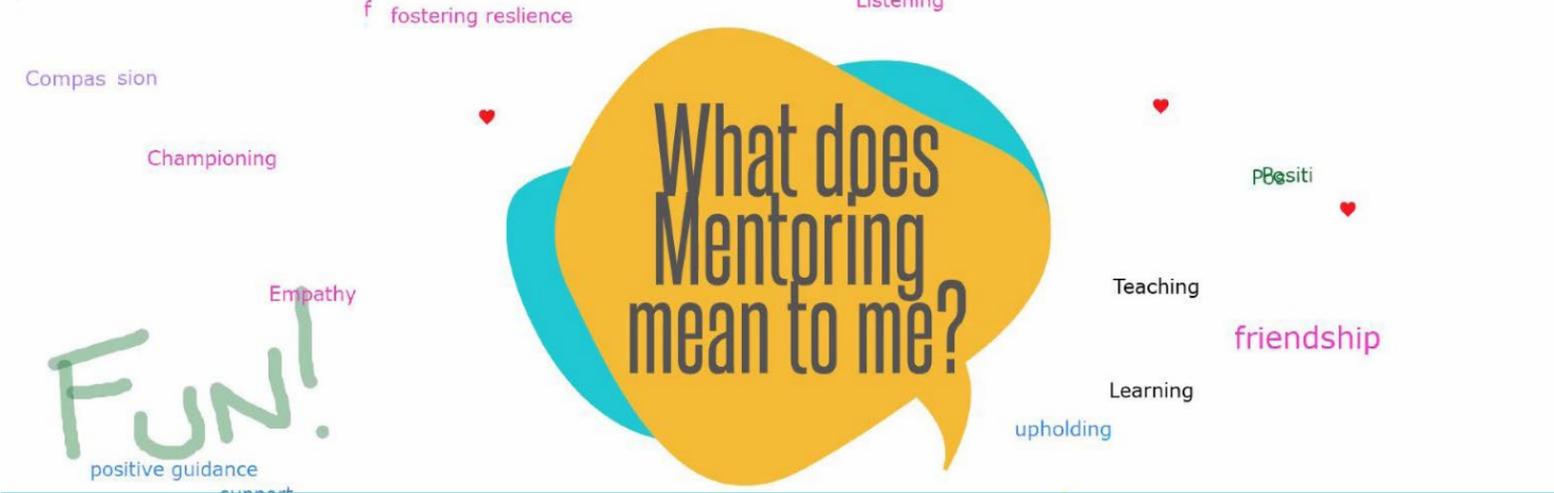


23 Go-girls from across the BC Lower Mainland signed on to attend the first ever Pajama Party; It was a total success! This 1.5 hour virtual party was filled with fun introductions, a scavenger hunt where everyone shared something that they are proud of, many 'would you rather' questions, and a deep chat about staying positive and safe while online. This event was hosted by a Big Sister staff with 2 Go-Girls Mentors and was catered towards the Go-Girls participants, so much that the girls did not want the event to end!

While 91% of youth reported feeling more disconnected from their community then pre-pandemic, The Go-Girls program has adjusted their program to create a safe online space for young girls to feel more positively connected to their community and build close friendships virtually. This online program helps girls overcome societal pressures by building the necessary confidence and self-awareness to thrive. The program promotes active lifestyles, balanced eating, and building self-esteem through activities, and discussions. This Go-Girls! Pajama Party will not be the last, so look out for future events!



All of us here at Big Sisters want to send a sincere thank you to the Diamond Foundation for their many, many years of championing youth in our community. Your long-term support of Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds program allows the potential of the young people we serve to ignite and shine!



Our 2020 Luminary Award Soirée celebrated our 60 years of igniting the potential of girls throughout the Lower Mainland. We are so grateful for your support in making this virtual production possible. With your help, we held a record-breaking event, raising over \$1,000,000!

For the milestone year, we had the privilege of recognizing six inspiring women in our community: The Honourable Janet Austin, Joanne Brown, Kay Gray, Linda Parsons, Patricia Shields, and Susan Mendelson. It's no secret we are living in uncertain times right now, and we thank our luminaries for talking about the impact a mentor can in helping young people overcome life's challenges and reach their full potential.

We listened to Peggy (Little Sister) and Pauline's (Big Sister) moving match story which has now turned into a lifelong friendship. Peggy proved to herself that she is strong and capable, she believes Pauline's entrance into her life was lifesaving. The two forged an emotional bond so strong that they were able to bring out the best in one another!



VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION EVENT 2020

While this year has been a tough one to say the least, our Annual Volunteer and Alumni Recognition Event on November 25th was a night to remember! We had over 100 volunteers, alumni, staff and Honorary Advisory Board and committee members that joined us to acknowledge their amazing contribution and commitment over the years with Big Sisters.

Everyday our volunteers, board members and alumni show youth that their possibilities are endless, and that their voice matters. It was a pleasure celebrating these inspiring individuals through fun themed trivia games, gifting door prizes and awarding three special individuals for the Big Heart Awards. Gayle Pelman, Carol Robinson and Kate O'Brien and Ed De Roches accepted the awards with deep gratitude and are truly inspiring leaders of this community.

To quote our esteemed Lifetime Big Heart Award winner Ed des Roches, "To commit to a young girl's confidence is just the most incredible thing you can do!"

SUPER GRATEFUL FOR SUPER PUFFS!

Big Sisters is thrilled by the partnership and incredible gift from Aritzia. It has been a challenging year for everyone but particularly the youth and their families we support. Aritzia is giving 85 deserving youth a super cool super puff jacket and we couldn't describe our gratitude in words, so check out the happy gals below! Thank you Aritzia for brightening up their holidays.





NEWS & UPDATES



STOCKING STUFFERS

Did you know?

By donating publicly traded securities, you eliminate the capital gains tax that you'd have to pay if you sold the securities and then donated the proceeds.

It's a great alternative to consider in your end-of-year tax planning and your gift of stock will help Big Sisters ignite the potential of vulnerable girls in our community.

FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT

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YOUR LEGACY IS HER FUTURE

Is our organization in your will?

Please let us know so we can thank you!

Email: akjennings@bigsisters.bc.ca

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON GIVE THE GIFT OF PRESCENCE

Visit [Facebook.com/fundraisers](https://www.facebook.com/fundraisers) to create your holiday gift campaign in support of Big Sisters!



The greatest gift you can give in 2020 is that of connection. Consider a personal fundraiser in lieu of gifts from your friends this year to give the gift of a caring mentor to an isolated youth.

Click [here](#) to create your holiday gift campaign in support of Big Sisters.

HELP US MAINTAIN MENTORING IN THE LOWER MAINLAND.

We do not know what the future holds, but what we know is that the Littles we support will need our help and their Big Sisters as the world recovers. [Click here to make a donation!](#)