

Letter to Editor Boston Globe:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay, the organization of which I am President and CEO, was wrongly criticized on these pages for adding the "Big Sisters" name to ours. The decision to do so rested, and still rests, on one simple fact: we serve both boys and girls. In the past year we supported more than 600 mentoring relationships ("matches") between Big and Little Sisters, out of nearly 3500 children served. We could not in good conscience continue to call ourselves "Big Brothers" when the organization was equally dedicated to serving girls.

We have no interest in merging with Big Sister of Greater Boston, despite inaccurate assumptions made here, and we plan to continue the close collaboration which has, for example, seen us refer more than 3000 names of potential volunteers to Big Sister in the past few years. Though they are one of just two Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliates in the country that still serve girls exclusively, we respect and support their desire to do so. Our name is provided by our national umbrella organization to which Big Sister also belongs and was changed in October 2006 to more accurately reflect our mission to serve both boys and girls throughout our service area. We neither own nor control the brand name and merely have permission to use it.

There are far more children in need than any one agency can serve. In our estimation, there are at least thirty thousand potential matches in our shared service area, and we will continue our daily collaboration with Big Sister and others to try to meet this need. The attention of every one of our 98 staff and thousands of volunteers remains focused on doing all we can to contribute to the healthy development of these children and young adults, despite the distraction of the legal challenge from Big Sister. This is what our mission is all about.

John B. Pearson
President & CEO
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay