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 - [The Inside](#)
 - [Editorial](#)
 - [Sports](#)
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 - [Events Calendar](#)

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 - [Advertising Rates](#)
 - [Submit Ad](#)
 - [Request Media Kit](#)
 - [Get Quote](#)
 - [Classifieds](#)
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 - [Online Payment](#)
 - [Circulation](#)
 - [Subscriptions](#)
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[Home](#) > [The Inside](#)

Students can help Boston kids during summer freetime

Keir Bristol

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For students who love kids and are looking for a way to spend extra time this summer, Massachusetts is jam-packed with volunteer opportunities and summer programs dedicated to helping children. From helping kids finish reading their first books to shooting some hoops, there are plenty of different organizations to choose from.

It doesn't matter whether you're on co-op or taking classes - these programs can help students improve Boston one child at a time.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Massachusetts Bay (BBBSMB) is an adult-to-child mentoring program that matches at-risk youth with adult role models. It is one of the oldest and largest mentoring programs in the country. Volunteers organize meeting times with the mentees' parents or guardians and spend time with the child participating in such activities as going out for pizza, playing video games or seeing a movie.

"I've been hanging out with Jalen, my Little Brother, since December, and I'd previously spent a year hanging out with another little guy, Rafael, during my sophomore year," said Adam Sell, a senior journalism major.

Sell has been a BBBSMB volunteer since September 2005.

"It reminds me of when I was younger, and while you're out with your Little [Brother or Sister] you don't worry about homework, you don't worry about co-op. You just toss the ball around for two or three hours and forget about all that stuff," Sell said.

BBBSMB volunteers must be at least 18 years old. For more information, visit bbbsmb.org, call 617-956-0281 or email be_a_big@bbbsmb.org.

826 Boston, a nonprofit literacy group in Roxbury, is for kids aged 6 to 18. Each volunteer is paired with a child, and the volunteer helps with homework, reading and creative writing projects. The volunteers also attend field trips with the kids, bringing them to different schools where they can help with similar projects, reading or editing.

Jennifer Ulrich, a senior environmental studies major, has volunteered with 826 Boston before.

[Continued...](#)

Page 1 of 2 [next >](#)

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