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KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education, Health and Human Services

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

of

Karen L. Schwartz

For the degree of

Doctor of Education

Interprofessional Leadership

**WHAT MATTERS?
A CASE STUDY OF YOUTH AND MENTORS AT
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS**

Friday, March 22, 2024

9:45AM

403 White Hall

Kent State University

[Microsoft Teams Link](#)

What Matters? A Case Study of Youth and Mentors at Big Brothers Big Sisters

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Karen is a social worker with decades of experience focusing on children and families. For most of her career she's worked in program implementation, strategic planning, policy development, grants management and finance. She worked at Juvenile Court for over 20 years and is now the Director of Programs at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lorain County, which has been incredibly supportive through this Ed.D. program and has allowed her to utilize more of her management and planning skills. When Karen is not working or finishing schoolwork, she can be found training her dog, (Whomping) Willow who is a bundle of energy at 2 years old and loves to learn as they train together every day.

For over 100 years, youth mentoring has grown to be an evidenced based prevention strategy for youth, demonstrating positive youth outcomes through strong relationships with caring adults. While trusting relationships are the mainstay of the positive impacts achieved through mentoring, the difficulty in recruiting volunteer adults has not met the steady increase of needy children and has encouraged the mentoring field to expand beyond the one-on-one mentoring model. In response to this challenge, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lorain County (BBBSLC) has developed innovative mentoring programs to allow for an increased reach and involvement for more youth. In this light, the purpose of this study was to identify and characterize its youth and adult volunteer participants. Through a quantitative study of application data and youth risk/protective outcome surveys at BBBSLC, the following research questions were addressed: (a) what are the characteristics of youth that seek community-based programming; (b) what are the characteristics of adult volunteers that seek to participate in programming; and (c) what are the predictive drivers of youth and adult volunteers that contribute to meaningful and successful community-based matches? Data was collected from youth and adult mentor enrollees from 2018 – 2023. Results indicated most prevalent descriptors for both adult volunteers and youth enrollees and data variables for predictability of being matched. Implications and recommendations for practice were also included. The researcher emphasizes the importance of these expanded forms of mentoring in conjunction with one-on-one mentoring in order to achieve positive youth outcomes for the greatest number of children.