

Miami Herald

Mentoring can ignite the potential of every child in the community

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By Gale S. Nelson



BBBS

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Miami, without question, is an incredible place to live and work. We enjoy its diversity, the beauty that surrounds us and the business growth that is ripe with opportunity and development. It is easy to be excited about the future, which will be passed along to the children of our community — children who will later be tasked to take care of us.

With all that we have, celebrate and care for, there is one startling statistic that we as a community must address: Miami continues to rank last among major cities for the number of residents who volunteer, according to the *Volunteering in America Report*, Corporation for National and Community

Service, 2018. In case you were wondering, Minneapolis ranks #1. Miami, we can do better!

All of us can understand what it is to have that special person who provided guidance, support and friendship who changed the trajectory of our lives. There are youth right here in our own backyard who are waiting to have their potential realized so that they can begin to make a positive impact in our community now and in the future.

I have to wonder as we begin 2019: What if we ignited the potential in *every* child? What would that look like in the context of academic performance, post-secondary success, workforce development and juvenile delinquency throughout Miami? The efficacy of mentoring and the effects that it has in all of these contexts is indisputable. The positive impact in the critical areas of personal and professional development should motivate each of us to get involved and make a difference this year. And the good news is that it is easier to begin than ever at bbbsmiami.org.

To all the companies that are making a difference through workplace mentoring, I salute you. The lifelong impact made by committing just four hours a month within your organizations not only helps local youth, but it changes your life and your corporate culture as well.

To the individuals who have committed to the cause of mentoring, you are special, but I ask each of you to recruit just one person to join the movement to ignite Miami.

Now more than ever, Miami needs to make a statement that we can, and will, take the lead in the mentoring space. We have the talent, we have the ability, we certainly have the children. Let's make 2019 the year that we leave no child behind. Right now our waiting list includes 1,000 kids across Miami, 60 percent of which are boys in need of a Big Brother.

Miami, we have incredible potential, let's all do our part as a mentor, as a donor, to ignite Miami for the world to see.

Gale S. Nelson is president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami.