

Worcester Mentor/Mentee Story Earns Opening Pitch Slot at June 4 Sox Game

BBBS match participates in Mentoring Night at Fenway Park

BOSTON – A year and a half ago, Worcester resident Shannon O’Connell was first introduced to her “little”, 12 year old Deondra, after becoming a mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest. When the pair initially met, Deondra was a shy fifth grader with uncertain plans for her future. With Shannon’s positive influence as a mentor, Deondra soon matured into a confident adolescent who aspires to one day attend college and is determined to lead a successful life.

Big Brothers Big Sisters submitted Shannon and Deondra’s story to Mass Mentoring Partnership in hopes that the pair would be granted a coveted on-field opportunity during the annual Mentoring Night at Fenway Park. Ultimately, the two were chosen to be one of two matches to throw out the ceremonial first pitch during the Red Sox vs. Tampa Bay Rays game on June 4, 2008. This was a very special night for Deondra, not only because she was able to out the first pitch, but also because it was the first Red Sox game she had ever attended.

Deondra and Shannon were among 700 other mentors and mentees from across Massachusetts present at this event, which was hosted by Mass Mentoring and the Red Sox. Of the 56 mentors and mentees who were from the Central Massachusetts area, 32 were matches from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest. The agency has two separate offices located in Worcester and Framingham.

In addition to the opening pitch slots, mentors and mentees from a variety of mentoring programs across Massachusetts were selected for other pre-game opportunities. These activities included being on air with NESN to announce the starting line-up, participating in pre-game NESN interviews, announcing “play ball” to start the game, and serving as a bat boy or girl.

NESN also broadcasted a new public service announcement to help promote the “Red Sox Mentoring Challenge” mentor recruitment campaign with the Mass Mentoring Partnership. The spots feature prominent Red Sox players, such Mike Lowell and Coco Crisp, calling for more people to “step up to the plate” and become a mentor. Since the launch of the campaign three years ago, almost 1,000 individuals have expressed an interest in becoming a mentor. Currently, there are nearly 5,000 children across the Commonwealth who are waiting to be matched with a mentor.

Mass Mentoring Partnership is the only statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to strategically expanding mentoring to meet the needs of youth across Massachusetts. For more information, please visit: www.massmentors.org.