



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Metropolitan Detroit



For More Information Contact:

**Jamie Farmer, Marketing and
Communications Coordinator**

313-309-9261 – office

248-821-6997 – cell

E-mail: jamie.farmer@bbbsdetroit.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Secretary of State, BBBS announce partnership to help at-risk teens become better drivers

Driver ed program with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Detroit aimed at enhancing driving skills and saving lives

Detroit, Michigan – October 16, 2014: Vehicular crashes are the number one cause of death for teenagers in the United States. Three out of five accidental deaths for teenagers and young adults ages 15-24 are due to car crashes.

Youth in the Detroit area are challenged in that fewer than half are licensed within one year of reaching Michigan's minimum age for licensure, and a little more than half get a license before turning 18 years of age. Many youth are opting to avoid completing the driving preparation courses and instead delay getting a driver's license until 18 years of age. This trend leads to an increase in crash risk as these youth are not adequately equipped with driving practice otherwise acquired during training courses.

In response to these alarming statistics, Michigan Secretary of State Ruth Johnson has partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies throughout Michigan, All Star Driver Education and the T. Wall Foundation to afford Graduated Driver Licensing courses for at-risk youth. The goal of the partnership is to reduce the crash risk associated with young drivers by exposing them to courses that require a minimum number of preparation hours. These extensive courses have shown to significantly reduce traffic fatalities for young drivers.

"This partnership has the potential to help many young people get the skills and experience they need to become good drivers and it is exciting to see our pilot program expanding across the state," Johnson said. "I'm grateful to Big Brothers Big Sisters, All Star and the T. Wall Foundation for working together to make driver education accessible to at-risk teens who otherwise could not afford it."

As part of this partnership, 20 teens in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit (BBBSMD) program will be awarded All-Star Driving course scholarships courtesy of All Star Driver Education and the T. Wall Foundation. Agency mentors ("Bigs") have committed to partnering with their mentees ("Littles") and their families, to ensure that they complete the required practice hours; better preparing them to be safe and cognizant, on-road drivers.

"Providing our community youth with safe, value-added solutions that contribute to their long-term positive outcomes is an important component of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit culture and mission," said Lynette Simmons, BBBSMD Vice President of Programs. "We are excited to partner with Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, the T. Wall Foundation, and All-Star Driving to provide this opportunity to our program Littles; an opportunity that may have once been out their reach. We are thrilled for our Littles and families who have been able to participate and who are on their way to becoming safe and prepared drivers."

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit

Big Brothers Big Sisters provides children facing adversity, often those of single or low-income households or families where a parent is incarcerated, with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one mentoring relationships that change their lives for the better, forever. This mission has been the cornerstone of the organization's 100-year history. And for forty years of service locally in the metropolitan Detroit community, Big Brothers Big Sisters maintains a stellar reputation of recruiting exemplary citizens to share positive experiences with metropolitan Detroit youth. For more information call 313-309-0500, visit www.bbbsdetroit.org or follow BBBSMD on Twitter: @BigBroBigSisDet and Facebook: BBBSMetroDetroit.