

Local legislators succeed in fight to save youth mentoring

BOSTON – On Aug. 7, Gov. Patrick approved the supplemental state budget, which included \$100,000 for the mentoring line item (7061-9634), previously eliminated by the governor in his vetoes in June. The \$100,000 was awarded to ten youth mentoring programs statewide and will play an integral role in their ability to help serve the 20,000 young people already in mentoring relationships and the 3,000 youth who are waiting to be matched with mentors.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampden County is one of only four Western Massachusetts programs selected to receive a portion of the \$100,000 line item.

According to Beth Russell, executive director, “This funding is crucial to our recruitment efforts and ability to provide service to our community’s children. Without the help of [State] Rep. Coakley-Rivera and many other legislators, this much-needed funding would not have been restored to the budget. We are

sincerely grateful for all their hard work on behalf of our community’s children.”

Coakley-Rivera filed the amendment to the budget and was instrumental in getting mentoring agencies back into the state budget. When asked for her thoughts on the importance of mentoring, she stated, “Mentoring Works; providing many at risk youth an opportunity to bond with positive adult role models, build their self confidence, and realize the potential they have. This is why funding mentoring programs is so important to our community. The support and encouragement of our youth fills our future with promise.”

A sign-on letter, circulated among House members by State Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, had the signatures of 26 representatives and was key in prompting the House to include the \$100,000 line item in its supplemental budget for 2010.

“We are extremely appreciative of the leadership of

Rep. Pignatelli and so many members of the legislature through this challenging budget process,” said David Shapiro, CEO of Mass Mentoring Partnership. “They recognize that youth mentoring is a cost-efficient strategy with proven results in key priority areas, like closing the achievement gap, youth violence prevention, civic engagement, and workforce development, and are ensuring that these results and the voices of isolated youth seeking critical connections are heard even in these challenging economic times.”

Mentoring Line Item funds are awarded through a competitive process and community review administered by the Massachusetts Service Alliance, which administers millions of dollars in federal and state funding. Programs are supported with training and capacity building from MMP based on the latest research and effective practices.

