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The Fall Classic

Evening Festivities

5:30 PM Doors open

Silent Auction

Open Bar

Charcuterie Station & Passed Hors d'oeuvres

6:30 PM Program

The Fall Classic Program

Hosted by Christian Jones, Big Brother

Welcoming Remarks

David Kubikian, Board President

Honorary Chair Remarks

Lt. Colonel Christopher West, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, NY State Police

2023 Match of the Year Award

Lisa O'Sullivan, Program Director

Program Announcement

Lea Montalto-Rook, Chief Executive Officer

Carlos M. Cotto Jr., Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Innovation,
Equity and Engagement, Schenectady City School District

Igniting Potential Award: *Wright Family Foundation*

Presented by Amelia Gifford, Board Vice President

Igniting Potential Award: *Jonathan Jones*

Presented by Lauren Valentine, Board Member

Fund-a-Need Paddle Raise

David Kubikian, Board President

7:15 PM Dinner Buffet Stations

Bar re-opens

Silent Auction- last chance

8:00 PM Dessert Stations

Coffee & Tea with Assorted Gourmet Desserts

Silent Auction Closes

8:30 PM Thank you & Good night

Enjoy the music performed by the **Brown Liquor Social Club**

Musicians: J Yager, Matt Donnelly, & Bobbie VanDetta



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and their dedication to mentoring
youth in our community.



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Welcome to The Fall Classic, a gala celebration to benefit the programs of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Capital Region! I am thankful for your presence and humbled by your generous support. Your attendance tonight reflects your commitment to our mission: to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. Thank you!

Tonight, we announce our remarkable 2023 Match of the Year. We invite you to celebrate this match's accomplishments as well as the successes of our five match nominees and all our Littles and Bigs. We honor our community partner the Wright Family Foundation for their extraordinary efforts for BBBSR and youth across the Capital Region. We also honor Jonathan Jones for his work on behalf of Albany's youth. It is because of them, and you, the people in this room—the key supporters of BBBSR—that our organization has been able to serve thousands of Capital Region children in recent years. Thank you for sharing your passionate commitment with us!

Tonight is also a chance to share our successes, our challenges, and our hopes and plans for the year ahead. While we continue to have much good news to share as we work to expand our programs and offerings--I cannot wait to share our BIG announcement with you shortly-- we are also keenly aware of the residual impact of the pandemic and the ongoing strain for the children and families we serve. We know that mentorship changes lives, strengthens communities, and builds hope for the future. Please spread the word about the great things happening at BBBSR—as our community grows, so do our opportunities to match Capital Region children to caring adult mentors.

I want to give a heartfelt thanks to everyone who had a hand in making tonight's celebration possible, including the staff, members of the Board, and wonderful volunteers. In addition, I want to acknowledge the generous support of tonight's underwriters who are listed in this program. Without their support, this evening would not be possible. Thank you once again for coming.

Enjoy the evening!

With gratitude,



Lea Montalto-Rook
Chief Executive Officer

A Message from the BBBSR CEO



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Thank you to The Fall Classic Honorary Committee for
believing in the power and potential of our youth!

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Lea Montalto-Rook and
Dr. Brian Sweeney
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Samoria Zurlo-Moyles and
James Moyles

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Capital Region Staff

Lea Montalto-Rook
Chief Executive Officer

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Lisa O'Sullivan, *Director*
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The Zurlo Family
Table Arrangements

Event Planning Committee & Volunteers

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Matt Haye
Candice Hunt

David Kubikian
Armand Leaks
Lea Montalto-Rook
Carin O'Brien

Alla Porter
Morgan Reed
Lauren Valentine
Samoria Zurlo

Dream Builders Auction

New for 2023! Our **Dream Builders Auction*** offers an opportunity to win fabulous prizes! The auction opens for pre-bidding on Monday, Sept. 25 at 12:00 p.m. and closes on Thursday, Oct. 12 at 8:00 p.m.

**Bidders need not be present to win. Physical items and gift certificates will be available for pickup at the Fall Classic event on October 12 or by arrangement from The Blake Annex.*

Dream Builders Auction: <https://new.biddingowl.com/FallClassic>

Prizes include Taylor Swift tickets, unique get-aways, tickets to the theater, bags & swag, unique art for your home, spa treatments, and more. Think you have what it takes to walk away a winner? Join the fun with the Dream Builders Auction!

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About Our Emcee: Christian Jones



Christian Jones is a Capital Region native and attended both Hudson Valley Community College and the University at Albany. He is also a current Big in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program. In his professional life, Christian first served as the event and development coordinator at Living Resources, a nonprofit in Albany that helps Individuals with disabilities and brain injury survivors. Currently, Christian is an Account Executive at the Albany Business Review, where he provides thoughtful marketing solutions to businesses of all sizes. In his spare time, Christian enjoys volunteering in the community, working out at Metabolic Fitness, and spending time with loved ones.

Match of the Year Nominee

Big Bryan & Little Markel Matched 2021

Big Bryan and Little Markel's growth throughout their match has been admirable. They have a comfort with each other that takes years to build. From the outside, these are two guys in different stages of life. But, on the inside they share the same demeanor, sense of humor, and approach to life. They are truly like brothers!

Markel immediately expressed interest in building a computer with Bryan during their initial meeting. Bryan, having a career in cybersecurity, is a tech-savvy guy and was 100% committed to accomplishing this goal. Ten months into their match they made the goal come to fruition! Bryan worked with Rosa, Markel's Mom, to budget for the different parts needed. Bryan did the research, found the pieces, and made it happen! Bryan and Markel spent a total of 8 hours putting together the parts for his new desktop and although Markel lost some patience/interest along the way, he pulled through! Immediately when Markel brought his newly customized desktop home he wanted to play video games with Bryan.

Bryan enjoys diving into conversations with Markel that are important but can be uncomfortable to confront. They have discussed topics of life/death, gang related activities at Little's school, engaged in learning together through building a desktop computer, and simply enjoy each other's company over lunch, all of which are equally as valuable. Bryan enjoys being "that person to give him as many opportunities as [he] can and help him understand situations in life that are complicated" and he truly admires that Markel "maintains his individuality and innocence" while facing adversity in his school setting.



Match of the Year Nominee

Big Michael & Little Ahsavion "Bebe"

Matched 2020

Big Michael and Little Bebe were matched in February 2020, one month before the COVID pandemic hit! They didn't let the challenges the pandemic brought stop them from developing a relationship, though. Until it was safe to meet indoors again, they participated in outdoor activities such as scavenger hunts. They also made sure to keep up their weekly phone calls!

Bebe is a man of few words, but Michael has really become his person. Michael connects well with Bebe and is okay with letting him be his quiet self. Bebe has become more talkative, though, over the course of their match. While he may be quiet in the car, he opens up once they hit their activity!



Mom appreciates that Michael is a "good communicator." She feels that they are a great match. Michael and Bebe have enjoyed many activities together over the years, including hiking, the aquarium, playing cards, going to the movies, bowling, Dave and Busters, and going to the amusement park!

Match of the Year Nominee

Big John & Little Caleb

Matched 2020



Caleb and John have been matched for 4 years. Caleb struggles to be positive sometimes, so John makes it a point to find activities that Caleb excels in to help build up his confidence. For example, Caleb has discovered that he is a phenomenal bowler. John and Caleb frequently go bowling and this year John encouraged Caleb to go out for the bowling team. Caleb made the team and is one of the star players! Caleb and his family are very proud of this accomplishment.

Angela, Caleb's mom, is over the moon with joy that Caleb has had such a successful match. Since the death of Caleb's father, he has lacked a male presence in his life, and so Angela was thrilled when Caleb began to work with John. She has noted that since John and Caleb have been matched, Caleb's grades have done a complete 180. Previously, Caleb didn't see the value in completing homework or doing projects. This year, Caleb didn't miss even one assignment! Angela also thinks that spending time with John has helped Caleb

socially. Caleb is now able to have long, detailed conversations about topics like his family, his desire to travel, his Jewish faith, and the connection that he feels to his ancestors.

Match of the Year Nominee

Big Rhonda & Little Audrey

Matched 2020

Little Audrey lives with her Grandmother Bonnie and her brother Jimmy. Bonnie sought a big sister for Audrey because she wanted her to have a positive role model in her life. Rhonda and Audrey have become very close over the past few years!

Audrey takes on many tasks in the home to help her grandmother. When they get together for match outings, Rhonda is pleased to take Audrey out and just give her an opportunity to play and wind down. They like to go to playgrounds, to the mall, and out to eat. Audrey is very shy and has had challenges making friends with other children. However, since being matched with Rhonda, Audrey has been able to open up a little more and has even arranged a few playdates this summer!

Bonnie is so happy to have Rhonda in Audrey's life. She wants Audrey to see that a drug-free, crime-free life is normal and achievable. Bonnie is also pleased that Rhonda can help Audrey navigate the world of social media. Rhonda is more than happy to help with these things and has actually helped educate Bonnie on a lot of technology along the way!



Match of the Year Nominee

Big William & Little Anthone

Matched 2015



Anthone and Will have been matched since 2015. Since the beginning, Little Anthone and Big Will have been the perfect pair! They have engaged in many activities throughout the years from ice skating, going to the movies, swimming at the YMCA, street hockey, Albany Firewolves/Empire games, cooking class with Chef Harley and video games.

Will has provided academic support when needed and last school year, Anthone made honor roll each quarter! Having a male role model throughout these eight years together is just what Anthone needed to blossom into the charismatic young man he is today.

Will acknowledges that Anthone is "smart beyond his years" and even with the growth of Will's own family, Anthone has been a priority. Anthone has fully embraced his new position as a "Big Brother" to Will's kids and he feels such a strong connection with them. Through COVID, he and Will had to put outings on halt for 4 months in order to ensure the safety of Will's newborn. Anthone met his son on Facetime but openly shared that he couldn't wait to meet him in-person to embrace this new change in their match family.

Present day, they spend quality time all together at Big Brother Will's home and at the YMCA. Big shared that Anthone has been mindful with his money and has saved this summer in hopes of getting a car this winter. Big Will and Little Anthone have an everlasting friendship that will continue to grow!

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