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BBBSOK honors Oklahoma House Speaker Kris Steele with governor's award

OKLAHOMA CITY — Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma and Gov. Mary Fallin presented the first-ever Big Brothers Big Sisters Governor's Award to House Speaker Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, during an event Oct. 12 at the Oklahoma State Capitol.

Steele has served as a Big in the organization since 2010 and is a major supporter of the BBBSOK Amachi program, which provides mentoring to children of incarcerated parents.

"I am very thankful for the influential, positive role models in my life as a child. Unfortunately, not every Oklahoma child experiences such blessings. I became a Big because I believe it is important to help children who, by no fault of their own, have been left without a steady, positive presence in their lives."

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said Steele. "I am honored to accept this award on behalf of everyone who devotes time to serving Oklahoma's children through Big Brothers Big Sisters. Every child has the potential to succeed if given the chance."

The Amachi program is designed to break the intergenerational cycle of crime among incarcerated parents and their children. Statistics show that children with incarcerated parents are five times more likely to become

incarcerated themselves at some point in their lives. Children matched through the Amachi program show significant outcomes after being matched one year with a Big Brother or Big Sister. Reports show that 68 percent show improvement in their classroom

behavior, and 73 percent report a better sense of the future.

"At Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma, we work hard to change the lives of these children and provide them with the support they need to be successful," said Sharla Owens, CEO of BBBSOK. "We could not provide that support without the help of dedicated volunteers like Speaker Steele, and we are so grateful to him."

Fallin said programs like Amachi make a difference in the lives of Oklahoma children and encouraged citizens to get involved in their communities.