

Governor's award honors house speaker

Big Brothers, Big Sisters honor Speaker Steele for Amachi program support

From staff reports

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma (BBBSOK) and Governor Mary Fallin presented the first-ever Big Brothers Big Sisters Governor's Award to House Speaker Kris Steele during an event Wednesday, 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," said Steele, R-Shawnee. "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."

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



Gov. Fallin, Speaker Steele and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma CEO Sharla Owens.

COURTESY PHOTO

"Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma and their volunteers are making a difference by providing friendship, positive role models and support to young children across

the state. I want to thank BBBSOK and all the Bigs across Oklahoma for all you do to support our families and our communities," Fallin said. "I can think of no better

recipient of the first annual Governor's Award than Speaker Kris Steele. Speaker Steele serves as a Big in his hometown of Shawnee. I appreciate his commitment to his com-

munity and the Amachi program and congratulate him on this award." To read about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma, visit www.bbbsok.org.