



Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Darden Foundation Partner to Advance Mentoring For At-Risk Children

April 30 2012 12:39 PM

Pictured presenting the Darden Foundation \$1000 grant are Fairview Heights Olive Garden associate Benjamin Cubberly, Manager Frank Ochoa, Big Brothers Big Sisters President and CEO Barbara Cempura and Olive Garden Manager Michael Cruz and associate Katie Niman.

Grant is one of nearly 900 to be awarded through the inaugural Darden Restaurant Community Grants Program

- April 30, 2012 - Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwestern Illinois, today announced it has been selected to receive a \$1000 grant as part of the inaugural Restaurant Community Grant Program from the [Darden Foundation](#), the charitable arm of Darden Restaurants Inc. The Restaurant Community Grant Program is a local grants program intended to help support nonprofit organizations in the hundreds of communities Darden and its restaurant brands serve. The donation will enable Big Brothers Big Sisters to match at-risk children with caring adult volunteers to serve as a friends and role models.

Restaurants within the Darden family - Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 - are helping to award more than \$1.7 million in local grants to nearly 900 exceptional nonprofit organizations

nationwide. Nonprofits receiving grants support one of Darden's three key focus areas: access to postsecondary education, preservation of natural resources and hunger.

"Each grant is not just a check - it is an opportunity to make an impact, from providing essential supplies to food banks in Oregon, to mentoring students in Phoenix and supporting environmental education in New England," said Drew Madsen, president and chief operating officer of Darden Restaurants, Inc. "Our service philosophy extends far beyond the walls of our restaurants. These grants bring that philosophy to life by helping to develop a better future for those we serve, one community at a time."

For more information about the Darden Foundation, please visit <http://www.darden.com/commitment/community.asp>. For additional information on Big Brothers Big Sisters please visit www.bbbsil.org.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters, the nation's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, holds itself accountable for children in its program to achieve measurable outcomes, including educational success; avoidance of risky behaviors; and higher aspirations, greater confidence and better relationships.

Partnering with parents/guardians, schools, corporations and others in the community, Big Brothers Big Sisters carefully pairs children ("Littles") with screened volunteer mentors ("Bigs") and monitors and supports these one-to-one mentoring matches in building safe, enduring relationships. The first-ever Big Brothers Big Sisters Youth Outcomes Summary, released in 2012, substantiates that its mentoring programs have proven, positive academic, socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes for youth, areas linked to high school graduation, avoidance of juvenile delinquency and college or job readiness. Big Brothers Big Sisters provides children facing adversity, often those of single or low-income households or families where a parent is incarcerated or serving in the military, 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. With about 350 agencies across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves nearly 630,000 children, volunteers and families. Learn how you can positively impact a child's life, donate or volunteer at www.bbbsil.org.

About Darden Restaurants

Darden Restaurants, Inc., (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates more than 1,900 restaurants that generate over \$7.5 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. In 2012, Darden was named to the FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For" list for the second year in a row and is the only full-service restaurant company to ever appear on the list. Our restaurant brands - Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52 and Eddie V's - reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit www.darden.com.

The Darden Foundation

The Darden Restaurants, Inc. Foundation is the charitable arm of Darden Restaurants, Inc. The Foundation's mission is to maintain a spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy as defining characteristics of Darden Restaurants. Since 1995, the Darden Foundation has awarded more than \$60 million in grants. Total giving in fiscal year 2012 amounted to \$7.8 million, 20 percent of which is represented by the Restaurant Community Grants Program. The Darden Foundation carries out its mission by focusing philanthropic efforts and resources on the following program areas: Access to Postsecondary Education, Preservation of Natural Resources and Good Neighbor Grants.