

2011 Detroit Pistons Mini-Grants College Access Event Examples

In April, the Detroit Pistons and Mentor Michigan awarded 11 mini-grants as part of the first-ever Detroit Pistons Mini-Grants. The Detroit Pistons Mini-Grants were made available to Mentor Michigan thanks to funds acquired through ticket sales from the "Mentoring Night at the Palace" Detroit Pistons game on January 22, 2011. Mentoring programs utilized mini-grants to host structured match activities throughout the spring and summer that promote college access and encourage mentees to think about post-secondary education. Below are a few profiles of the 2011 Detroit Pistons Mini-Grant college access events held across the state!

The H.O.P.E. Mentoring Program – MYOI

On Friday, June 10, MYOI and the Midland/Isabella DHS hosted a panel presentation in which three former foster youth who successfully managed the transition from the foster care system to college shared their stories and wisdom. The event was titled "From Foster Care to Success: College and You!"

Three young women affiliated with the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) spoke at the event, sharing their experiences and offering advice to current foster care youth, their caregivers, and service providers, as well as give practical information on scholarships and grants. Youth in foster care, parents, guardians, caseworkers, DHS personnel, and members of the community were all present at the event.



Panelist Sara Cometto advised foster youth in the audience to "make a decision of where you want to be with your life and take charge! Dream big. Dream extremely big. You're going to do wonderful things." Panelist Danielle Starnes discovered her passion as a cosmetologist and encouraged foster youth to explore all the options for post-secondary education, including 4-year colleges and universities, 2-year colleges, and technical and vocational schools. Panelist Angela Hoffman, a recent graduate of Michigan Technological University, stressed the importance supportive foster parents and others in her transition to college and called upon all the caring adults in the audience to make a big difference through a simple card, letter, or phone call.

The event was a huge success, providing inspiration, advice, and practical information for foster youth making the transition into college!

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Washtenaw County

BBBS of Washtenaw County hosted their University of Michigan Scavenger Hunt in June 2011. The campus scavenger hunt enabled participating matches and youth on the waitlist to explore the University of Michigan Campus while learning about classes offered at the university, what it means to be a student, and campus opportunities and options. The program stresses the importance of promoting the college-going culture and increase a child's interaction with and knowledge of the higher education system in order to create the goal and interest in attending college. The campus scavenger hunt showed the Littles within the program that college is attainable and allowed them to explore their academic and extracurricular interests from a college positive perspective.

Twenty-five matches, ten volunteers, and ten youth on the waitlist were able to participate in the scavenger hunt, which included five sites and six clues. With each successive clue and destination the matches completed activities such as finding their favorite class in the U-M course guide, asking a college student a question, or finding books in the library in order to gain the next clue and destination. One of the stations also included a community service project, highlighting the importance of volunteerism and giving back. Each location across campus had volunteers who helped the match with the site's activity, shared campus fun facts and statistics, provided the next clue, and gave college/school themed prizes! The campus scavenger hunt concluded with food and drinks and the distribution of prizes including U-M apparel and books. One participant exclaimed that it was the best group event they had ever been to!

Winning Futures

Winning Futures took high school students on a college tour at Oakland University. The goal of the college tour was to expose students to the benefits of continuing education and get them excited about pursuing higher education and their career goals. For many of the students, this trip was their first time on a college campus.

During the event, students went on a guided tour highlighting important campus offices, various classrooms and classes, and the athletic offerings in the OU gymnasium! The students not only got to witness the academic environment, they also got a great "snapshot" of the social environment that college life offers. They toured the dorm rooms, ate lunch in the campus cafeteria, and had a chance to visit several student organizations. One of the participants exclaimed "This place is so cool, it's like a little world except it is safe." The day ended with a GREAT inspirational talk by Dr. Reginald McCloud, Director of Pre-College Programs.



In addition to the college tour, matches participated in two sessions, "Preparing for College 101" and "Preparing for College 201" to help the students think strategically about their career goals, how college can help them get there, and the financial aid available to make college a realistic option. Four of the students that went on Oakland University tours with Winning Futures this year ended up applying and will be attending in the fall!

Bethany Christian Services

Bethany Christian Services invited matches, as well as unmatched youth from their waiting list, to a campus photo scavenger hunt activity at Grand Valley State University. The purpose of this event was to not only teach mentees about resources available to attend college, but to also allow mentor matches to tour a college, have fun, and truly see what it is like to be a college student. Participants toured campus, taking pictures of important campus locations, and talked with GVSU students at the five informational booths around campus. At the end of the photo scavenger hunt participants gathered in a room on campus for lunch, reviewed the answers of the scavenger hunt and discusses their experiences on campus. Lastly, participants made vision boards based on their experience at GVSU as well as their hopes and dreams for attending college in the future and/or their future career. Pictures taken at the event were developed and provided to participants to add to their vision boards. Creating the vision boards challenged youth to really think about going to college, their desired career, and the steps they need to take to get there! Additionally, youth were provided a welcome bag from GVSU which included financial aid and admissions information, including foster care specific financial aid options and scholarships!

BBBS Michigan Capital Region



On Wednesday, June 1, Big Brothers Big Sisters Michigan Capital Region hosted the agency's first Graduation Celebration at Perspective2 Gallery in Old Town Lansing. The event honored Littles in the program graduating high school and the success of their matches. Bigs and Littles matched from three to eleven years were in attendance, as well as families of the Littles.

Former Michigan State University football player T.J. Duckett addressed the group, congratulating and encouraging them to continue on the path to success and give back to their communities. Additionally, AmeriCorps Members serving within the agency presented college resources to assist the Littles in preparing for higher education, including: college applications, financial aid information, and awareness of the Michigan College Access Portal.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Gratiot & Montcalm Counties

Big Brothers Big Sister of Gratiot & Montcalm Counties held a Big/Little/Kids Connection activity at Alma College on May 21, 2011. The intent of the activity was to tour the Alma College campus and to make the Littles aware of 'life after high school'. It was a beautiful, warm and sunny day in Alma, Michigan when the Littles met at the Dow Science Center for a demonstration and visit of the Planetarium. At the conclusion of the Planetarium portion of the tour, participants were treated to lunch in the Alma College dining hall, where the selection impressed the Littles in the group!

A Big Sister in the group, also a current Alma College student took the group on a tour of the campus, giving them an up close and personal look at life as a college student. They visited a dorm room, the campus library, a classroom, and a lecture hall. The Littles were amazed that college students have to cross campus outside to get to the various building during their school day. The Littles were also given access to the Rec Center, the Performing Arts building, and the football stadium to experience the “fun” side of being a college student. The event was a great success as the Littles in the program are now excited about “life after high school” and can actually see themselves as part of a college campus!

Big Brothers Big Sisters in the Heart of Michigan

Big Brothers Big Sisters in the Heart of Michigan took mentoring matches on a Scavenger Hunt at Central Michigan University. The Scavenger Hunt helped make being on a college campus a reality for Little Brothers and Little Sisters, many of whom have only dreamed about college. College campus scavenger hunts are a great way to tour the campus and learn fun facts about the school! College students served as models and showed the Littles that college can be a reality and not just a dream.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County

Matches from the Michigan Center Classroom to Classroom program of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jackson County went on a college tour of Eastern Michigan University to encourage college access. The Classroom to Classroom program matches Michigan Center High School leadership students with students in a fourth grade class at Keicher Elementary.

A total of 23 mentors and 21 mentees were able to attend the event. The high school aged mentors were able to experience being on a college campus, and the fourth grade students were greatly impacted as well. Prior to the trip, when the fourth grade class was asked how many of them were going to college only half of the students raised their hands. Throughout the college tour, the Jr. Bigs proved to be great role models, and knowing that their Bigs are attending college in the near future encouraged the fourth graders to do well in school and learn that college is an attainable goal! After the trip, many of the mentees exclaimed “I am definitely going to college now,” indicating a positive change in their attitudes toward college. This activity highlights the importance of promoting a college going mindset with mentees starting as early as elementary school and continuing through high school graduation!

