

Headline: A Lil' Love Makes a Big Difference

Subhead: Seniors create mentoring program to include freshmen

On the first day of school, seniors, juniors and sophomores returned to their familiar halls, while the freshmen took in their new campus and lifestyle for the very first time. This task can be daunting. To help ninth graders feel more welcomed, the seniors created a mentoring program called "Bigs and Lils" to create a more inclusive school. The program paired a senior with a freshman based on a variety of factors then encouraged the pair to attend school activities together to bond and deepen their relationship.

Three senior girls approached algebra teacher **Randi Williams** to sponsor their mentoring club. Williams agreed to sponsor the organization because she said it could create a more cohesive school and make underclassmen feel less intimidated by the upperclassmen.

"I think it really helps to have freshmen have a mentor to look up to, who's going to guide them through their first year of [high] school," Williams said. "The freshmen will be more comfortable being here and they'll feel more a part of the school."

Mentor and senior **Cassie Forcellini** said she was motivated to become a Big Sister because she transferred high schools her freshman year and was faced with knowing very little people. Forcellini said she wished the program had been around during her freshman year because it could have brought her closer with her mentor and her classmates.

"These freshmen come in here and they're probably so intimidated by all the upperclassmen," Forcellini said. "I think it [is] a great way to show them that they're welcomed here and that we really want them to be included."

Forcellini is mentoring freshman **Emily Minard** and Forcellini said she is excited to grow closer with her and help her throughout high school.

"I just want [Minard] to feel welcomed here," Forcellini said. "If she needs advice with friends or school, I could be there for her."

Minard said she was looking forward to spending time with Forcellini and learning tips on how she got through high school and was eager to go to events and activities with her.

"I like [the program] a lot and I think it's really fun having a Big, because we get to meet new people and it's less nerve-wracking when you know more people," Minard said. "It definitely makes me feel more welcome."

