

PNC Woman Named Nation's 2003 `Big Sister of the Year'

- Christa Washington Chosen From Among 267,000 Youth Mentors -

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Christa D. Washington has been named the 2003 National Big Sister of the Year by Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America. Chosen from among 267,000 similar volunteers nationwide, she is Pittsburgh's first winner of this national honor for her outstanding efforts as a friend, role model and mentor to a local youth.

Washington, of North Point Breeze, was honored today by the Pittsburgh community in a ceremony held at PNC Firstside Center, downtown, where she is an assistant vice president in human resources at The PNC Financial Services Group. Mayor Tom Murphy issued a proclamation declaring it "Christa Washington Day" in the City of Pittsburgh.

The national award was presented June 20 at the BBBS of America's conference in Nashville, Tenn., by Lynn Swann, board member of BBBS of America and Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee.

Washington has been matched since 1997 with her "Little Sister" Sade, now 17, through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh. Among the most rewarding aspects of the experience, she said, is witnessing Sade's personal growth from elementary school, to high school, and very soon to college.

"I have shared and celebrated in her numerous successes ranging from an outstanding report card to obtaining her driving permit," Washington said. "I also have experienced her resilience through disappointment and sometimes heartache. Somewhere along the way, she has blossomed into a remarkable and talented woman."

"Over time, the individual activities and time together have combined to become meaningful for both of them," said Walter F. Jenkins, executive director, BBBS of Greater Pittsburgh. "Christa has helped Sade gain greater self-confidence, expand her horizons, and realize a higher potential in life."

"All of us at PNC are proud of Christa's accomplishments and we congratulate her on being named the country's Big Sister of the Year," said Sy Holzer, president, PNC Bank, Pittsburgh. "This award is recognition the commitment and dedication of Christa as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh to help others and make Pittsburgh such a great place to live."

Washington became a Big Sister in July 1997 because she, in her words, "wanted to be a positive influence in a young person's life and to share experiences that have enabled me to become a professional woman." In addition to developing a strong friendship, she and Sade have enjoyed a variety of fun and worthwhile experiences.

Background: Christa and Sade

Washington serves on the board of the Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania, the North Point Breeze Planning and Development Corporation, and the West Virginia University Social Justice Steering Committee. A native of Piedmont, W.Va., she has a bachelor's degree in business management from West Virginia Wesleyan College and a master's degree in public administration from West Virginia University. She previously was named Big Sister of the Year for BBBS of Greater Pittsburgh and the state of Pennsylvania, nominated by her case manager, Kristine Pace.

Sade graduated with honors from Perry Traditional Academy on June 22. She has been active on the school's drill team and Upward Bound. She will take summer classes at the University of Pittsburgh, and attend Penn State University's main campus in the fall to study international business or business marketing. She resides with her mother in Highland Park and attends the Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church, where she is in the choir.

In addition to serving as a traditional BBBS match, Washington and Sade participate in the Pathways Program, a special mentoring program through BBBS of Greater Pittsburgh. The Pathways Program is an incentive-based program designed to inspire students to excel academically, participate in community service, and benefit by having a mentor. Children who fulfill these goals receive \$10,000 upon graduation from high school to continue their education, start a business, or purchase a house.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh is the region's leading one-to-one mentoring organization. Founded in 1965, BBBS of Greater Pittsburgh is a nonprofit, prevention-based agency that serves the community by providing quality mentoring relationships to children who are primarily from single-parent families. During 2002, 986 area children in Allegheny, Washington and Greene Counties benefited by having a Big Brother or Big Sister.

SOURCE: Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

CONTACT: Walter F. Jenkins, Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh; 412-363-6100, ext. 215; wjenkins@bbbspgh.org

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