

EAHCP STEWARD

News from the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan - December 2019

Dream BIG

EAA Supports Big Brothers Sisters Mentoring Program



The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program has a storied history. It has operated for 115 years going back to a juvenile court in New York City where Ernest Coulter, a court clerk, noticed that an inordinate number of fatherless boys were appearing before the judge. So, he gathered 50 volunteers to

mentor those boys and started a movement that is still growing and evolving today. And while that amazing story is worth knowing and telling, the true impact of the program is felt when you witness the connection between a mentor and a child and understand how a positive human bond can help shape both of their lives in a big way.

The program calls mentors “Bigs” and the children “Littles.” Big Brothers Big Sisters has learned that connecting “Bigs” with middle school children is the best opportunity for both the kids and mentors to bond. These are very formative years for the soon to be teenagers and a time when an adult can help create a solid foundation for them.

Aquifer Storage and Recover - Continued

“There are two main components to Big Brothers Big Sisters where you can be a mentor in a workplace scenario or in a community setup,” said Damon Childs, Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) contract administrator and a board member for Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Texas. “In the workplace program, you meet with your Little once a month typically during the lunch period. Contact with your Little is pretty much limited to that one hour for the month. The community facet of the program allows you to visit your Little a couple of times a month, take them places and communicate with them more freely. I’ve been fortunate to have participated under both sets of guidelines and I can say that helping young kids like that gives you a deep sense of satisfaction. I can only hope that I’ve given them as much as they’ve given me.”

Childs says that he got involved in BBBS right after he earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He was paired with an eight-year-old named Isaiah and stayed involved through BBBS until Isaiah aged out of the program at 21. They are still friends today. Isaiah, now 24, attended Child’s graduate degree ceremony and wedding as well. They’ve continued to keep up with each other’s lives and families as you might expect a bond created over 16 years would engender.



“Isaiah is a fine young man,” Childs said with a proud smile. “He’s in the telecom construction business and still trying to find his way a bit on a career path. He is smart and works hard so I have every confidence he will get where he wants to be in life.”

Shortly after becoming a “Big”, Childs was asked to be on the board for the South Texas Chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters. He recalled that he immediately said yes and now has a decade of experience as an official with the organization. About a year ago, he decided to get the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) involved in the BBBS workplace program.

“When Damon approached me about being a Big, I was a little hesitant about joining,” noted Latifah Jackson, a Contracts and Business Development Coordinator for the EAA. “I was wondering how I would relate to a sixth grader and what I might have to offer her. But it didn’t take too long before we got to be friends. Not long after I was paired with my Little, Mo’nay, her family moved to another part of the city. I didn’t want her to think that I was going to abandon her, so I decided to transition from the limited contact workplace format to the community part of Big Brothers Big Sisters where I will be able to spend more time with her and pick her up for outings and such. I just want to be there to support her and guide her the best I can.”

Pollution Prevention - Continued

Both Childs and Jackson explained that connecting with family members is extremely important to being a successful Big. Jackson said she regularly texts Mo'nay's Mom to keep up with their lives and Mo'nay's progress in school.

The EAA now has 17 Bigs who get to meet with their Littles, all from Jackson Middle School, once a month at the EAA. The Bigs and Littles share lunch, work on an activity together and have some on-one-on time before the Littles get back on the bus and head to school. These meetings give the kids an opportunity to discuss anything that is on their mind with the full attention of their mentors.

Jackson and Childs say they've noticed that some of the kids have picked up an interest in science after learning about the Edwards Aquifer and EAHCP program that helps protect the endangered species found in the Edwards Region.

On one particular visit, the group was given a 3D video presentation from the EAA Communications Department of the Edwards Aquifer. The kids got to experience what it would be like to navigate through a cave and learn about the geological features that exist right beneath us.

"Mo'nay was interested in animals and science when we first met," Jackson said. "She is now particularly interested in endangered species. She was surprised to find out that you don't have to go to some exotic location in the world to find an endangered species. We have them right here in our own back yard."

"It would be awesome to someday have one these kids be an intern at the EAA and maybe even find a job here," Childs noted. "Latifah says that sometimes you just have to plant a seed, care for it and good things will happen. I couldn't agree more with that sentiment and that's really the whole philosophy behind Big Brother Big Sisters. You never know who is going to inspire you. And after being a part of the program for so long, I know that inspiration works both ways between Bigs and Littles."



EAHCP STEWARD SHORT TAKES

Joint Committee Meeting Scheduled for Dec. 19

A joint meeting of the Stakeholders, Science and Implementing Committees is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 19, 10 a.m., at the Edwards Aquifer Authority offices in San Antonio. If you have any questions or if you want to RSVP, just email eahcp@edwardsaquifer.org.

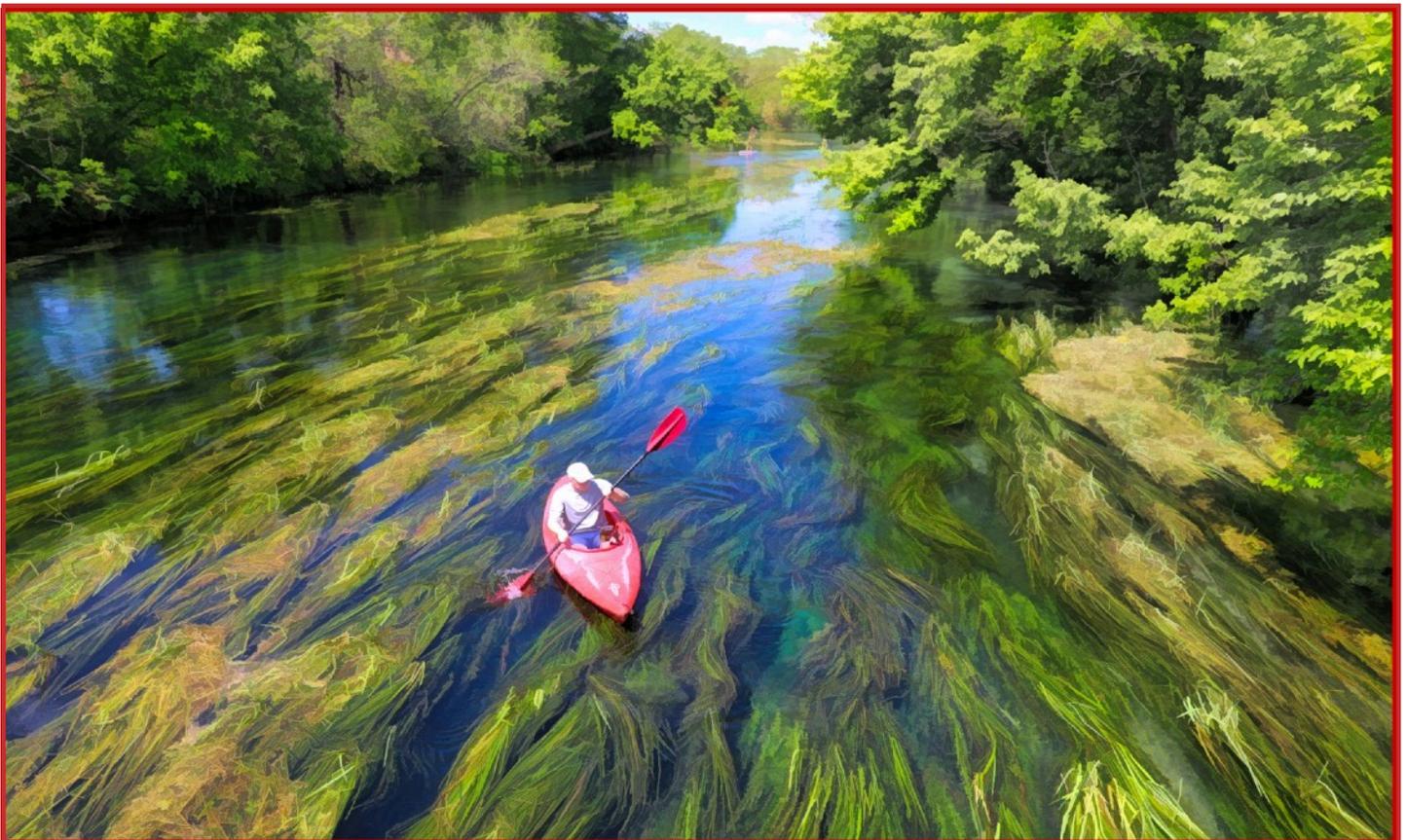
EAA Offices will be closed Dec. 24-26

Short Takes - Continued



Comal Springs Riffle Beetle Work Group Concludes Work for 2019

The Comal Springs Riffle Beetle Work Group completed its work for 2019. With several research efforts in the works for 2020, the committee will convene at the end of next year to review research results. Pictured left to right are: Conrad Lamon, Ken Ostrand, Butch Weckerly, Tom Arsuffi, and Chad Norris.



*Happy
Holidays*

*From your friends at the
Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan*