



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida announces Virginia Thomas Big of the Year

PANAMA CITY, Fla. – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida announces that Big Sister Crystal Arnold has been selected as Virginia Thomas Big of the Year. Crystal's dedication to her Little Sister Torrina's education has clearly changed her life, for the better.

Since getting matched in December of 2015, these two have enjoyed swimming, cooking, and reading together. Crystal and Torrina love to go to the library together. Torrina will pick out books and the two will spend hours reading together. "Crystal taught me to always be kind and help others if I can," Torrina says. "Crystal is like my sister!"

Torrina's mother, Brittany, says that she could not do it without Crystal. "The countless hours that they have spent together at the library have really improved Torrina's grades," Brittany says. Match Specialist Leanne Gaudet agrees, sharing "Crystal is consistent, caring, and has changed Torrina's world. Their match really embraces the simplicity of caring and believing in a child."

"It's amazing to see the academic improvements made in this match," says Big Brothers Big Sisters President and CEO Paula Shell. "Crystal has been so dedicated and it's amazing to see the changes in Torrina as well."

Virginia Scott Thomas was born in Birmingham, AL and lived there until she joined the United States Marine Corp in the very first group of women to join from Alabama. She was extremely proud to be a Marine and everyone knew it. She moved to Panama City in 1965 and, with her husband Tommy, opened Tommy Thomas Chevrolet which is now known as Bill Cramer GM. Virginia was involved in our community, sitting on different community boards, including Girls Inc. and the Anchorage Children's Home. Her passion and heart were children, opening doors and opportunities they otherwise would never have.

Virginia loved her children and grandchildren, attended many a baseball, soccer, softball game, was a Girl Scout Troop leader and made it a point to teach all children about our country, our flag, and our military.

Virginia made a big impact in this community and in the lives of so many children throughout her life. So, it gives us great pleasure to honor her and her life with the Virginia Thomas Big of the Year Award for Bay County.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida has been the area's leader in one-to-one mentoring for 29 years by serving children ages 6 to 18. Our mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever. Last year, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida served 616 children in Northwest Florida.

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Photos attached.