

A Conduit for Kids' Futures

continued **▲** from front

says there are thousands of kids waiting for mentors on what has essentially become Big Brothers Big Sisters "no-list".

In Portland, many of those kids are boys. 70 percent on the list are young males looking for Big Brothers, while 70 percent of mentors are female. Waiting to get connected, Vickers said, boys are at risk of aging out of the program or worse, taking a wrong path: dropping out of school, affiliating with gangs, violence, drugs, etc.

As a leader of African-American diversity initiatives at Big Brothers Big Sisters, Vickers was recognized for an approach to connect more adult black male mentors to boys seeking guidance.

Her skills earned her the nickname "the super connector" by Portland Monthly Magazine.

Last year, Vickers partnered her non-profit organization with several Portland churches — through the 11:45 movement — to sign-up 200 volunteers, prompting a national buzz. Never in the history of the agency had so many mentors been garnered in one night.

"It was an answer to a prayer," said Vickers, but really she's just good at what she does.

Vickers knows how to build relationships with community and corporate leaders, and



businesses.

She hopes to continue to seek support from community partners so as to ensure that every kid who needs a mentor gets one.

The alternative is unacceptable. "If you feel like you have no adults in your life and you don't feel love and support and consistency in your life, you're going to go searching for it," said Vickers.

For girls, the unguided path can lead to sex trafficking. For boys it may be gangs, drugs, or jail.

Vickers moved back to Portland, so that her seven-year-old Laila could have a supportive male in her life, her grandfather. She wants to make certain that she builds up the future for her child as well as the children in the community.

"If their lives are better, they will be able to support each other as well," she said.

PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Big Brothers Big Sisters executive Chabre Vickers has earned recognition for her approach to connecting more adult mentors to children seeking guidance. Her skills earned her the nickname "the super connector" by Portland Monthly Magazine.

FOOD



Cheesy Italian Tortellini

Ingredients:

Original recipe makes 6 servings

- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 1/2 pound Italian sausage, casings removed
- 1 (16 ounce) jar marinara sauce
- 1 (4.5 ounce) can sliced mushrooms
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can Italian-style diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (9 ounce) package refrigerated or fresh cheese tortellini
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Crumble the ground beef and Italian sausage into a large skillet.
2. Cook over medium-high heat until browned. Drain.
3. Combine the ground meats, marinara sauce, mushrooms, and tomatoes in a slow cooker. Cover, and cook on LOW heat for 7 to 8 hours.
4. Stir in the tortellini, and sprinkle the mozzarella and cheddar cheese over the top. Cover and cook for 15 more minutes on LOW, or until the tortellini is tender.

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