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## OHA and Big Brothers, Big Sisters fill generation gap at Earth Day event

The Orange Housing Authority and Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson and Union counties partnered on Monday, April 20, to celebrate the 45th anniversary of Earth Day at the Washington Manor public housing complex in Orange.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentees and seniors shared their love for the environment through a variety of activities. The two groups organized an Earth Day celebration to plant and paint recyclable flower pots, in addition to learning how they can create sustainable initiatives for future generations.

"This is my first time I worked with the elderly at a senior housing complex," said Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentee, Daja, 16. "It's been a rewarding experience to help those who have done so much for our community over the years."

"It's imperative for our mentees to work with people of all ages," said Michele Williers, chief operations officer for Big Brothers, Big Sisters. "It is opportunities such as these that help bridge the gap between young and old. It builds trust and understanding between two generations that do not often interact."

Earlier this year, members of the Orange Housing Authority promised to expand its role to increase services to the community at-large. By doing so, the authority has partnered with a series of community organizations, such as Essex County, the Orange Public School District and Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

"Earth Day is one of many informative programs at OHA that we can use to not only appreciate a healthy community, but to remind us of the importance of preserving it for our future through positive actions," said Orange Housing Authority Executive Director Walter D. McNeil Jr. The Orange Housing Authority is committed to improving the community by incorporating cultural and



At the Earth Day event on Monday, April 20, are, from left, Jeffrey Wingfield, vice chairman for Orange for Public Schools; Big Brothers, Big Sisters Youth Workforce Opportunity Initiative Coordinator Wolete Rutty; Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentee Alshaquan; Big Brothers, Big Sisters Chief Operations Officer Michele Williers; and Big Brothers, Big Sisters mentee Daja.

educational activities for the public. For example, the agency is hosting a golf tournament Monday, Sept. 21, to

enhance their ability to help youth within the Orange Housing Authority community.

For more information on upcoming events, visit the Orange Housing Authority's website at [www.haconj.org](http://www.haconj.org).