

Big and Little Brother Remain Close Friends after 39 Years

Mentoring has long-term impact

Even four decades after their first meeting, if you ask Scott Young how long he was matched with his Big Brother, he answers assuredly, "We're still matched."

Scott, now 47, was introduced to his Big Brother Jim in 1977. They graduated from the Big Brothers program in 1987 but their friendship remains as strong as it has ever been.

"I was just over at his house the other day actually," says Scott. "We talk a couple times a month. He sometimes comes out to watch my son's [sports] games, just like he did for me."

Scott recalls how much it meant to him as a child to see Jim cheering him on at his soccer games. "Even if it was early and cold and wet outside, I could look out and smile at him like 'look at me!'" Scott also has fond memories of the two fishing together, racing in a soap box derby, and being dressed up as a bowling pin for Big Brothers' very first bowling fundraiser.

"I often laugh at myself because even as an adult, whenever I try something new, I always feel the urge to get Jim's approval," says Scott, a world-renowned flair bartender and successful entrepreneur who is about to launch his second business. "He has been such a role model to me, someone older to emulate. He got me involved in volunteerism. But he never preached anything to me. He just showed me how to be a good person." Jim continues to serve as a volunteer Board Member for *Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver* Clothing Donation.

Today, giving back to the community is not only a priority for Scott, he is also passing on these values to his own son Wyatt. Scott and Wyatt started an initiative last year called Kindness Bookmarks, a free project for kids to spread kindness in their community. "We've created these downloadable bookmarks that kids get to colour in and write down their own ideas on how to be kind. The kids then put them into library books or hand



Jim (R) became a Big Brother to Scott (L) in 1977; their friendship has never waned.

them out to friends and family as a way to spread kindness in the world," explains Scott. Wyatt is just seven – the same age as when Scott first met Jim – but has already helped his dad distribute over 7,000 of these bookmarks and spoken in front of his entire school about them.

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Why I Volunteer: Bonding over Bikes, Books, and Brotherhood



By: Sid Gautam

I met my Little Brother Matthew* in 2014, so we are close to the three year mark of me being his Big Brother. When I first started volunteering, like with any new experience, there was a bit of awkwardness. We had a lot in common, which helped us initially in deciding what activities to do together, but it was really our sense of mutual respect and understanding that steered our friendship to develop more organically into a sense of connectedness.

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*Names have been changed to protect the safety and privacy of the children whom we serve.

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Why I Volunteer: Bonding over Bikes... (continued)

92% of mentored children report feeling confident

“I don’t wish to be everything to everyone but something to someone.”

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Our relationship has grown significantly over the years. Spending time with him doesn’t feel like an act of duty; we enjoy each other’s company.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals and corporations who donate to Big Brothers, Matthew* and I have tried lots of fun and adventurous activities. We’ve watched the Canucks, the Whitecaps, and the Vancouver Canadians. One of our favourites is the annual sailing event and barbecue. Matthew is also really into Japanese anime and manga, so we’ve been to anime and tech conventions.

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There was one time that we volunteered together at a non-profit bicycle repair centre. Every year we make it our goal to bike around Stanley Park at least once. I wanted Matthew to experience the satisfaction of working with one’s own hands, and to my surprise, a kid who spends most of his free time playing video games actually enjoyed getting his hands dirty repairing bikes. He took apart an entire bike by himself. Our hands were covered with all sorts of grease and dirt by the end of it but luckily, they had heavy-duty soap for that, and we grabbed pizza afterwards. That’s my favourite memory of us together.

I’ve seen quite a bit of change in Matthew, partly because he is at an age where there is a lot of change. But I am glad to say that the changes in him have been very positive and character-building. He is definitely more confident in his ability to express himself and take leadership. Just the other day, he told me how he rarely gets to express emotions because he

spends most of his time in front of a computer or TV screen. But with me, he has become more open over time and will talk about almost anything that is on his mind or about topics that interest me. It’s nice to see him learning to compromise and to know that we are solidifying our bond as Big and Little.

When I first started volunteering, I didn’t know that I would find the experience so rewarding, but looking back, I am definitely grateful to my mentors – my parents, the authors of great memoirs and autobiographies that have shaped me – I would be quite lost without them. The poet Javan once wrote, “I don’t wish to be everything to everyone, but something to someone.” That idea has always resonated with me and motivates me to keep building my friendship with Matthew.

For any of you who are considering volunteering or donating to Big Brothers, my advice is to “Just Do It!” — but be wary of altruism, it’s quite contagious!

Early Intervention: RCMP Mentor Builds Trust in Community

Using mentoring as a preventative strategy

Many kids dream about being police when they grow up, and now Big Brothers is helping children find mentors in the RCMP. Big Brothers has built partnerships with RCMP detachments in Burnaby, Surrey, North Vancouver, as well as with the Vancouver Police Department.

Surrey RCMP member Constable Karen Baker has been volunteering as a mentor to James* since February. Karen is the School Resource Officer for several schools in the Guildford area. Her work has her interacting regularly with school staff, parents, and youth, but this volunteer mentorship has given her a chance to build a deeper friendship with her mentee.

“James is a very positive young man. He has become more open since our first meeting and recently expressed his trust in me,” explains Karen. “He enjoys playing basketball, an activity we often do together.” She adds that James has a lot of potential as an athlete.

Through the Big Brothers In-School Mentoring program, Karen visits James at his school for one hour a week. They spend quality time together playing sports, reading, or doing crafts. This adds to the positive experiences that children and youth have with police. “By being in the schools, youth see that police are part of their community too,” explains Karen.

From her years of service in the RCMP, Karen has seen that negative behaviours can afflict children from all income levels, races, and family situations. “However, I have seen that youth with positive role models are more likely to make positive choices more often,” says Karen. “Engaged youth feel more acceptance and value which encourages them to make better choices and reach out when in need.”

“Early intervention – involving parents, police, schools, and the entire community – is key to preventing young people from



Constable Baker spends quality time once a week with her Little.

being lured into criminal behavior,” she adds.

Big Brothers offers a variety of flexible volunteer opportunities to teens and adults of all genders, including one-to-one, in-school, and group mentoring programs. Visit bigbrothersvancouver.com to learn more about how you can volunteer or donate to help children in your community.

Mentoring Matters. So Do Your Donations.

Each year, your clothing and monetary donations give over 1,000 community kids in Greater Vancouver access to mentoring programs that change their lives for the better.



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We accept all gently used clothing and small household items. Book online at BIGclothingdonation.com or call 604.526.2447



Former Little Brother “Pays It Forward” As an Adult

Little Brothers are 50% more likely to volunteer as adults



Little Brother Scott (R) describes his Big Brother Jim (L), pictured holding Scott's son Wyatt, as part of his family.

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“So much of this has come from stuff I learned from Jim,” assures Scott, who also credits his mom for being a great influence on his life. “I remember this one conversation I had with Jim that was a turning point for me. I was in grade 9 or so – those tough teenager years – and I was supposed to argue in a debate that this was ‘a great time in history to be alive.’ Except I didn’t really feel that way. Some war was going on, there was a teachers’ strike, and things in the world felt unstable. I told Jim that I didn’t know how

to argue this. So he pointed out the good things: we had medical care and the standard of living had improved in the last 100 years. He pointed out all of these things that I had never considered before. It was that moment. It changed the way I look at things.”

But the picture was not always rosy between Jim and Scott. “My mom tells me that Jim once spoke to her because he was worried that I didn’t like him very much,” laughs Scott. “I was a really quiet kid with him, and I guess in the beginning

I didn’t give Jim much in terms of positive feedback.”

As an adult, Scott describes himself as a realistic optimist. “I realize now that that conversation we had in ninth grade could have never happened. Instead, it was a turning point. Maybe in large part because of Jim’s guidance at that critical moment, I chose to have a ‘glass is half-full’ outlook. And because of my respect for Jim and how he treats people, I made a choice to be a good guy. I credit Jim and my mom for that.” Scott even chose “James” for his son’s middle name which is Jim’s legal name.

“I can’t repay Jim but I can pay it forward. Hopefully, I’ve lived a life of good, of trying to help people.”

To help create life-long change for children today, volunteer or become a monthly donor today: bigbrothersvancouver.com.



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