

Roland & Alex's Story

Giving the gift of presence year-round

Looking back, *Big Brothers* volunteer and monthly donor Roland Wood wishes he'd had a Big Brother mentor when he was a kid.

Roland grew up in Ontario, raised by a single Mom, and didn't have many mentors in his early years. "My mom actually offered to sign me up for a Big Brother but I said no," Roland recalls sheepishly. "I can see now that it would've helped me; I was a pretty shy kid."

After moving to Vancouver seven years ago, Roland applied to volunteer as a Big Brother. He was matched with his Little Brother Alex (who thankfully did agree to getting a Big) in 2012, and they've been together ever since. "Alex was 7 when we were matched, and he's 13 now," says Roland, "so it's almost half his life I've been around."

Roland says he feels lucky to have Alex as his Little. "He's a great kid," Roland relates. "He tends to be a bit of a shier kid, more of a homebody kid, so getting him out at the beginning, at the early stages, was sort of a little bit tougher." But now, Roland and Alex do a lot of different activities together, from movies to hiking, pitch 'n' putt to laser tag. They often just head to a park to kick a soccer ball around, and Roland loves going to Alex's soccer games.

One of Roland's most treasured memories is attending Alex's grade eight graduation. "It meant a lot to me that he wanted me there, and I was happy I could make it," he says.



Roland (right) has been a Big Brother to Alex, 13, (left) for almost half of Alex's life.

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Out & About

A BIG thanks to our event sponsors, volunteers, and community supporters!



A Little Brother and his mom joined us in celebrating the opening of our office in Surrey, which is the city where we have the most kids on our waiting list.



Bigs and Littles alike always have a blast at our annual sailing event at Jericho Sailing Club!



This Little Brother got to hang out with our Ambassador and BC Lions player Manny Arceneaux at our B2Gold Big Brothers Golf Classic fundraiser in September.



Bigs and Littles were given the VIP treatment at a BC Lions game thanks to Special Risk Insurance Management. They even got to high-five the players before the game!

Roland and Alex's story (continued from page 1)

Roland has seen the impact that his presence has had on Alex's life. "He's become a lot more open," Roland explains, and goes on to talk about Alex's more positive attitude toward school and willingness to try new things. But their friendship has also had a wonderful impact on Roland, who encourages anyone who's been thinking about becoming a Big to go for it. "People say, 'It's so great you're a Big Brother,' and I tell them, it's the easiest volunteering I do! I go out and have fun."

Roland is not only a constant source of support for his Little; he also recently became a year-round contributor as part of our Monthly Donors Club. "I wanted to give to Big Brothers because it's more meaningful to me, and also because I know they can use the dollars more," explains Roland. "I just know the support that goes into the programs — the hard work that [Big Brothers caseworkers] do — and I know that the dollars always matter for [the organization] and every little bit helps...It's not one of those organizations where you've got a lot of money going to the people at the top."

To learn more about volunteering or becoming a monthly donor, visit bigbrothersvancouver.com.

Why I Volunteer: Sophia's Story

Mentoring comes full circle for teen volunteer

When people ask, "What does mentoring mean to you?" the answer often has something to do with someone who has given career advice. But mentoring plays a much bigger role in most of our lives, even if we don't recognize it as "mentoring" exactly. We have other names for it: friendship, family, kindness.

For Sophia Nguyen, volunteering as a Big Brothers Teen Mentor just sounded like a fun thing to do. "My parents owned a children's play centre so I grew up around kids," explains Sophia, who recently won a Ted Rogers Scholarship for her volunteer contributions. "I figured, 'why not give [volunteering] a try, have fun, and learn something from them?'"

Despite a very busy year in twelfth grade, Sophia found that the weekly hangout with her Little Buddy felt like a reward rather than a chore. "As our friendship grew, my Little Buddy wanted me to be happy just as much as I wanted her to be happy, so we encouraged each other," says Sophia, whose Little Buddy was in sixth grade. "She even gave me some good ideas for my other volunteering with the Red Cross."

The Big Brothers Teen Mentoring Program provides leadership

training to high school students (Big Buddies) then matches them with a Little Buddy at a nearby elementary school.

"We liked the same stuff which was pretty awesome. We'd make up our own games, pretend we were fishing, draw, sing Top 40 hits — anything creative."

Sophia's favourite memory with her Little Buddy was the day of Sophia's birthday. "My friend had given me a balloon and I had it with me on my way to the mentoring program. My Little Buddy seemed upset that day. She was trying to hide it but I knew. So I gave her my balloon and suddenly, her face lit up. She was so happy and hugged me. I was astonished that something so small changed her mood so completely."

As Sophia thinks about her own childhood, she recognizes that someone else had been there for her too — her friend Lisa. "Lisa worked at my parents' business. She has become like a big sister to me. I was seven then and she was 16. I was a pretty grumpy kid, and shy. If I didn't get a good mark at school, she would tell me it's OK and we'd dance around and laugh. She gave me confidence."



Sophia was awarded a Ted Rogers Scholarship for her volunteer work in the community, including being a Big Brothers Teen Mentor.

Now, as Sophia embarks on her first year of university at SFU, she looks forward to being a mentee again in the mentorship program for Business students. It seems that mentoring — whether under the name of 'friendship' or 'family' — will be a life-long gift for Sophia.

And she hopes to keep the cycle going. "It's sad to think that kids are waiting a long time for mentors. Volunteering is such a great opportunity, and you don't have to do it alone. The Big Brothers staff are sort of like your mentors who guide and train you so that you can help someone else grow."

#BigBroments

Big Brother Seamus always thought it was nice that his Little Brother would share his snack whenever they hung out together.

It wasn't until later that Seamus realized what was happening: his Little Brother would ask his mom to pack extra snacks just for Seamus each time, because he knew that Seamus often came straight from work to meet up with him.

What a thoughtful Little Brother!

Share your #BigBroments at stories@bbgvf.com.

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Who Taught You to Give Back?

Little's learn from their mentors' example



These teen boys hosted a charity lemonade stand this summer to raise funds for BC Children's Hospital.



These five junior riders competed in a women's only bike race in Squamish — an event which raised over \$10,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters Sea to Sky Corridor!

When kids are surrounded by positive role models, it's that much easier for them to imagine making a difference in their own communities! Earlier this year, youth in two of our group mentoring programs — *Game On!* in Vancouver and *Go Girls!* in Squamish — participated in fundraisers to support other local children.

In June, the teens in one of our *Game On!* mentoring programs organized a charity lemonade stand outside of Mount Pleasant Library in Vancouver. As they were drawing up the plans for the fundraiser, they collectively chose BC Children's Hospital to be the charity beneficiary of their volunteer efforts. With a little help from their Big Brother mentors, the teens hosted a very successful — and tasty — lemonade fundraiser!

Earlier this summer, five junior riders from our *Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds* mentoring program took part in *Hot On Your Heels* — a women's only mountain bike race and fundraiser organized by one of our Big Sister volunteers in Squamish. Along with 385 other women riders, the youth successfully tackled the 25km course (reaching 1200m elevation). Big Sister mentor Melissa Sheridan started this fundraiser to not only support children through *Big Brothers Big Sisters Sea to Sky Corridor*, but she also wanted to create a welcoming space for girls and women in the male-dominated mountain biking scene. This one day event raised \$10,000 for *Go Girls!* programs in Whistler and Squamish.

It's an understatement to say that we are SO PROUD of these Littles and their mentors for leading by example to making their communities better for other kids! Way to go!

