

THANKS TO A FRIEND

By Josh – Little Brother, Ontario

My name is Josh and I have been with the Big Brothers Big Sisters since I was about 12 years old. A lot of people say that organizations like this have no real impact on the community and most importantly on the individuals. I am writing to tell you just the opposite. My story started out before I was even 12 as I came from a bad past. Like many kids in my situation, I didn't have a lot of friends, not a lot of family and no one to turn to. My mom found Big Brothers and signed me up. I started out in the In-School Mentoring program where I was matched with my first future Big Brother, Sammy. At first I thought, "Well this is a load, someone wants to hang out with me, yeah right." I had a very negative attitude towards it because I was so used to not having someone to talk to. Well, all of that changed in a heartbeat.

Sammy and I hit it off and I found myself looking forward to my visits with him at school every week. I became very fond of him. Chantal, my caseworker from the agency approached me one day and asked me if I wanted him to be my Big Brother. I jumped at the opportunity and we were later matched together. I loved it! It was amazing to have someone who just accepted me for me and wanted nothing but to have fun. We would go to the movies and go camping but



my favourite activity was when we would just walk around aimlessly and simply hang out and talk. It was great. I found myself previously leaning towards bad habits but with Sammy around when something bad happened in my life he would always be there for me. He was there if I wanted to talk or just needed someone to hang out with and have fun. Though I did not notice it right away, the time I spent with him had a significant impact on my life. I find myself looking back and thinking, "What would I have done without him?"

Sammy was really and still is to this day like a brother to me. Later on down the road, Sammy had to move away. I was bummed out and I really didn't want him to go, but he

had to. Thanks to him he provided me with more than just a Big Brother to hang out with. Without even noticing it, he had provided me with key things such as the abilities to socialize and have friends, simple things that we take for granted.

After Sammy was gone, life still had to carry on and I found myself in new trouble and new situations that I had no one to help me with. That's when Al came along. Chantal had once again worked her magic and found me a new Big Brother. He was loads of fun. I was getting older now and well, the good old facial hair started to come up. Al was the first one to show me how to shave. I realize that you may be thinking that my facial hair is an odd thing for me to bring up in this story, but I

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will explain. Like I said I am getting older but I am thankful that I was paired up with someone older like Al. The reason why I say that is because I was going through the teen stage and I needed someone that could be more like a father figure to me and Al was just the guy for the job. We would hang out all the time and I again found myself liking just hanging out, walking around and talking about life to be more fun than anything else we did. He was someone I could always turn to and ask for advice no matter the subject. Al is a police officer and that was one of the best things about him. I don't think he ever realized it but because I have so much respect for him and loved hanging out with him, whenever I was faced with things such as drugs



I always found myself thinking, “No I can't do that, if I get caught Al will find out and he won't want to spend time with me anymore.” I know it may sound stupid but really, if it wasn't for him, God only knows what I would have gotten into.

I no longer live in my hometown and I am now 17 and graduated from the program, my relationship with Big Brothers Big Sisters remains the same to this day. Even though I'm living my own life now and getting ready for college soon, I still find myself sometimes sitting alone thinking back to my time with Big Brothers. How much fun I had and how much I have grown with my Big Brothers and Chantal and how much they have affected my life for good. I think if I never had

this program I would have been a statistic. I would have been that kid you see rob the gas station on the 6 o'clock news. But thanks to all of the love and support the program and its volunteers have given me, I didn't. Thanks to all of them, I live a happy life and some day maybe next year or maybe in five years I hope that I will have to opportunity to be a Big Brother to someone and mean as much to them as my Big Brothers have meant to me.

This is a not only a life changing but life saving organization founded on love and kindness to help kids who need it. [Trust me, they changed my life and I wouldn't change that for the world.](#)