

Be a big...You'll be Glad you did.

By **KELSEY MCINTOSH**

Eight years ago I decide to become a Big Brother.

Last year I was asked to be a member of the recruitment committee for the Big Brother/Big Sisters organization.

But today is perhaps the most important day of all.

Today is the first day of Big Brother/Big Sister awareness week here on P.E.I., and it may be just the day a waiting 'Little' gets matched with a 'Big.'

As a Big Brother, my only obligation is to provide a one-to-one relationship with a child from a single parent family. I am not expected to be either a disciplinarian or a councillor. 'Bigs' are caring, reliable adults from all walks of life, who are willing to share a few hours a week with a child.

As a Big Brother, I have had the pleasure of watching my 'Little' grow up from a grade two student to a sixteen-year-old who will be soon getting his driver's license. Some of our time is spent watching movies, playing sports, going to the beach, doing a little homework, or going out to eat. Some outings may include small expenditures but 'Bigs' are encouraged to keep spending to a minimum.

There are currently over 60 matches here on P.E.I., but most disturbing is that there are over 100 kids waiting for his/her 'Big.' Some kids have to wait anywhere from 3 to 5 years to be 'matched.' The need for 'Bigs' has reached its peak.

Eight years ago I read an article about this same waiting list and it was all the reason I needed to volunteer. My 'Little' had been waiting for his 'Big' for over two years.

Most people assume they are too busy to take on such a big commitment. My eight-year relationship with my 'Little' is an exception. Bigs are only expected to commit a minimum of six months to the program, which is in the best interest of the child. I, like most people, have a career, friends, and other responsibilities, yet I actually look forward to that time where I can do those 'kid' things with my 'Little.'

Sharing a child's interests will expand yours, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have made a contribution to a young person's life. As many organizations often seek financial help from the community, instead I urge you to donate your time to a child. Be a Big Brother/Big Sister! You'll both be glad you did.

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