

More than making a difference

--Article by Lauren Seidl, The Racquet, October 8, 2009

Making a difference in someone's life isn't something everyone can say they've done; it takes time and effort to truly have a positive influence on someone. UW-La Crosse graduate student Andrew Boldt knows this, as he's been dedicating his time to a child through Big Brothers Big Sisters for the past five years.

Boldt, who is currently in his second year of grad school for physical therapy, stumbled upon BBBS in his search for résumé builders. "Sports were the only extracurricular I had," said Boldt, who ran middle distance events for UW-L's track and field team.

Becoming a Big Brother wasn't a difficult choice for Boldt. "I like hanging out with kids," he said. Having two younger sisters himself, he says that becoming a Big Brother came natural to him.

Now, five years after his decision to join BBBS, Boldt still spends time with the Little Brother he was originally matched with. Having watched his Little grow from a prepubescent fifth grader to a quickly maturing high school freshman, Boldt admits, "It's weird to watch him grow and mature."

Throughout the past five years, Boldt has been spending two to three hours with his Little each week. Although this time commitment isn't a big one, he confessed that it was challenging at times, especially during the track season. But Boldt said that once he and his Little got together it was always easy to just relax and hang out.

During the school year Boldt and his Little do homework, play video games, or go bowling. Over the summer they played a lot of sports, especially baseball. Boldt and his Little attended many La Crosse Loggers games as well.

Getting together during the summers Boldt spent in La Crosse was easy, but he could still manage his Big Brother duties while living in his hometown. "I would send him an email at least every other week," Boldt said. This, along with visiting La Crosse once or twice was enough for him to stay with the program, which requires Bigs and Littles to be matched for at least one year.

Boldt is happy with his decision of becoming a Big Brother. "It's cool to be involved with his family and see that I'm having a positive impact," Boldt said, "His family says they can see a difference, especially in school." Over the past five years, Boldt also noticed that his Little has become more responsible and respectful.

Sadly, this will be Boldt's last year with his Little, since his schooling is taking him out of La Crosse. "He knows this is the last year," Boldt said, "We've talked about it." While it'll be hard to stop spending time together on a regular basis, Boldt and his Little hope to stay in touch.

Students interested in becoming a Big Brother or a Big Sister shouldn't hesitate in doing so. It looks good on a résumé, the time commitment is small, and it won't cut into your college-student budget. It isn't necessary to spend money, and sometimes Bigs are given discounts if they choose to treat their Little to something that does require some cash.

Right now BBBS is especially in need of Big Brothers; the number of boys on their waiting list is already up to thirty. For more information on how to become a Big Brother or Sister, call 608-782-2227, or visit www.7riversbbbs.org. According to Boldt, "It's easy and fun. You get to act like a kid." Sounds like a great way to build a résumé and a life-changing relationship.