



LETTER FROM THE MOM OF A LITTLE BROTHER

Dear Friends,

My son Zion has always been a good-natured child – he is an overall fun-loving, smart, respectable kid with a great sense of humor. He’s never been shy and has always made friends with great ease. As a single mother of an only child, I always felt it important to expose him to different things and keep him active by engaging him in school and sports activities. However, even with all these things – time, love, attention, guidance, and support – the guilt of being a very busy single mom would kick in from time to time and often had me questioning if it was ever enough. What more can I do? What am I missing? What more can I give him to ensure his best chance at reaching his fullest potential?

At the time Zion entered middle school, I began to notice a change in his grades and overall attitude towards school. As with many kids his age, it was obvious that the influences and distractions of his school environment were beginning to negatively impact his grades as he was starting to “act out” behaviorally. At this crucial time, I realized there was something more he needed, and I needed to seek out a different approach. I began by reaching out to male relatives and acquaintances to spend time with Zion and help reinforce positive behaviors to get him back on track. This approach proved effective for a while. However, due to time and distance, it was becoming clear to me that this effort, although a good one, would be short lived.

I then enrolled him in individual therapy then group therapy. I even enrolled him in a more advanced level of martial arts in an attempt to get him more disciplined and focused. All attempts at getting him back on track worked only temporarily. I was at my wit’s end and couldn’t think of one more thing to try.

From time to time, I would receive flyers from Big Brothers Big Sisters, and they would usually end up sitting on the table and eventually tossed. One day, I picked up that flyer and decided to check out their website to learn more about the program. Within days, I made the initial call to BBBS. In a couple of months, I received a call from BBBS regarding a match for Zion. My nervousness dissipated quickly upon Zion’s first meeting with his Big Brother Kemar. By the time they’d returned from their very first outing, it was clear to me that they were already beginning what I had hoped to be a solid and long-lasting relationship. Zion’s eyes twinkled, and his growing anticipation of meeting with Kemar again got me excited too.

For over four years, the experience with Kemar has changed both our lives in very positive and unexpected ways and surpassed what I could have ever imagined. His unwavering commitment, support and guidance has been a true Godsend, and observing how Zion has grown under Kemar’s mentorship over the past years has been a humbling and heart-warming experience for me.

I cannot say enough about how Zion still gets that twinkle in his eyes when his meeting with Kemar is approaching. I am truly amazed at the positive impact Kemar has made on my son’s life – it’s been a great pleasure getting to know him and see how he and Zion’s relationship has blossomed.

It is amazing to me how much Zion has changed over the years. He is more mindful in his approach and decisions, and he’s matured in ways that still astound me. I am a proud parent who is extremely grateful for all that Kemar selflessly gives, and I am looking forward to all the good things to come for my son with Kemar’s continued support in the future.

With thanks,

Jeanette Marion

OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Mission Maker
THE MORRIS & CLARA WESHNAK
Family Foundation



Hackensack
Meridian Health

Mentor Makers



WORDS OF APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE FROM LITTLE BROTHER ZION



KEMAR & ZION AT THE BBBSMMC GALA

Ever since I met my mentor Mr. Kemar Phillips, my life has done a complete 180. When he and I first met, I felt an instant connection. After a few meetings, Mr. Kemar and I started to really get to know each other. We often talked about school and he was always there to give me the best advice. I can't believe it has been a little over four years since I met him. I feel as though he has been around for a lifetime. Besides family, he is definitely a person that I admire with the utmost

respect. He is a hard-working business man and very successful in his life; I aspire to be a lot like him. Mr. Kemar always would encourage me in school even when my grades were slipping and would say I could do anything I wanted as long as I put my mind to it.

He pushes me to go farther than I could ever have imagined and that is what I really appreciate about him. When I slip, he's always there with words of encouragement to pick me up; he'll tell me to brush it off, take a breather, and keep movin'! He is always there to listen – I can talk to him about anything without a bit of bias and he talks with an open mind. Family, a mentor, and an overall great person is what I think of when I think of Mr. Kemar. I am so glad that I am able to share these experiences with him, and I'm so very happy he is my mentor.

MATCH HIGHLIGHT

Adam and Seven have been matched for five years this month! When they were matched in May 2014, Seven was an active, friendly, 7-year-old. Over the years, they have enjoyed playing and watching sports, going to Jenkinson's Aquarium, looking at fossils in the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center, going to the movies and museums, and attending many of the BBBS Kids Club events. Most recently, Adam took Seven to his first professional basketball game to see the 76ers in Philadelphia! They not only established a strong friendship and bond but also created their own traditions. Each year, they celebrate their friendship with a trip to Sky Zone and dinner at Applebee's, and for Seven's birthday, they go to Medieval Times. Seven will be graduating 8th grade in June and



BIG BROTHER ADAM & LITTLE BROTHER SEVEN

recently expressed his gratitude to Adam for helping him with anything he needs. Adam has not only enjoyed spending time with Seven but also seeing how much he has matured over the years. In a recent conversation with Seven's mother, she stated, "Adam and Seven are a perfect match for each other, and Adam feels like family now."

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT



HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR & MENTOR TALBANIA

This month, we celebrate high school senior and mentor Talbania. Talbania has actively participated in our Perth Amboy High School/McGinnis Middle School program for the last two years as a mentor to a middle school student. She will be graduating high school in June and plans to join the Marines and study culinary arts. Talbania is currently training twice a week for boot camp, which she will be attending in six months. Once she successfully completes boot camp, she will be reconnecting with her recruiter to seek job opportunities within the Marines that focus on the culinary experience. Talbania will complete a total of eight years, four years of active duty and four years in the reserves. During this time, she will be able to go to college. We wish Talbania the best of luck and appreciate her time as a mentor!

UPCOMING EVENT



JANET LEPPO | Workplace Mentor of the Year

Janet has been a mentor in our Project Venture Workplace Mentoring Program at New Jersey Natural Gas for seven school years. She arrives to every session with a bundle of enthusiasm and positivity. Her current Little Sister, 13 year old Roseli, shares the same level of enthusiasm and greets her with a giant smile and hug. Although Janet has mentored a new Asbury Park student each year, Janet says her current Little *"is a peach."* Janet really enjoys their sessions and is happy with how her Little is making the most out of the mentoring experience. Janet works in the Customer Service



JANET & LITTLE SISTER ROSELI

department as a supervisor, and we are happy she has chosen to make such an enduring commitment to our Workplace Mentoring Program!

STEM AMUSEMENT PARK

Bigs and Littles at the Asbury Park 8th Grade Program recently engaged in a STEM *"amusement park"* engineering activity through our friends at Snapology. Groups worked on building structures you would find at an amusement park—swing rides, rollercoasters,



8TH GRADERS WORKING ON THEIR SNAPOLGY STEM PROJECTS



and more—and then got to put their rides to the test by connecting them to battery powered engines! It's always great to spread the love for science, technology, engineering, and math to our next generation of innovators!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO OUR MAY MATCHES

- Big Brother Adam & Little Brother Seven **5 Years**
- Big Brother Andrew & Little Brother Ethan **3 Years**
- Big Sister Jessica & Little Sister Keyisha **3 Years**
- Big Sister Wendy & Little Sister Layla **2 Years**
- Big Sister Lowynda & Little Sister Amira **2 Years**
- Big Sister Kathleen & Little Sister Kellyann **2 Years**
- Big Sister Gina & Little Sister Ariella **2 Years**
- Big Sister Leigh & Little Sister Sammy **2 Years**
- Big Sister Cheryl & Little Sister Nakira **1 Year**

BE A BIG.

YOUR COMMITMENT:

- 4-6 hours a month with your Little for at least one year

YOUR IMPACT:

- Defending and igniting a local child's potential

bbbsmmc.org

WANTED: A BIG BROTHER

Andrew is an outgoing 6th grader who loves music and sports. He likes to spend his time skateboarding, jumping on trampolines, playing basketball, and going to the beach. He plays on the rec basketball and track teams. He wants a Big Brother who can motivate and encourage him to do his best in school and make good choices.

Find out how to BECOME A BIG at www.bbbsmmc.org