



LETTER FROM KAREN BOTTARI, BIG SISTER OF THE YEAR

Dear Friends,

I would have never thought that 11 years later, I would be writing about being a Big Sister and the impact it has had on both of our lives. I have always loved being with children and felt that we can all make a difference in one life at a time.

Knocking on the front door of my potential Little Sister's house, I didn't know what to expect. Never doing anything like this, I took a deep breath and the door opened with a warm greeting from cute 7-year-old Tyquashia. I felt right at home five minutes after we started talking. Ty took my hand, and we sat in her room playing a game.

In the months ahead, we shared lots of outings. Swimming was one of her favorites. We took bike rides, went to Point Pleasant boardwalk and rode lots of rides, ate at many different restaurants and walked on the beach, baked cookies at Christmas time, colored Easter eggs, carved pumpkins, and she even helped me paint.

Ty has such a funny and happy way about her. We shared lots of laughs and some trials through the years. She knew I was always there as a mentor and friend. I was not her mother nor had any interest in treating her like a daughter. I wasn't there to judge her choices; I was able to listen to her and offer advice about certain circumstances as they came up. I was there unconditionally, and that's what a Big is.

I have been more than blessed being a Big sister to Ty, and I am so happy to be a part of her family as she is a part of mine. I can only encourage more people to give of themselves to make a difference in one child's life at a time. In this world of technology, all children want is to have one-on-one time with someone other than their parents or guardians that they can trust, talk to, and just be themselves with.

Ty and I are friends forever. Now that she has turned 18, Ty has aged out of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, but our relationship doesn't end. As Ty graduates this year and is looking into career options, I look forward to watching her grow into a young adult.

I can't wait to see what the next 11 years hold for us, and maybe I'll even pursue being matched with another Little!

Warmest regards,

Karen Bottari

Big Sister of the Year

MATCH HIGHLIGHT



Big Sister Karen and Little Sister Ty are one of our longest lasting match relationships. They met 11 years ago when Ty was just 7-years-old! Ty's outspoken personality has met her match in Karen who is Ty's tireless defender and advocate in many facets of her life. Needless to say, Ty and Karen now consider themselves "real" sisters. Although they aren't getting together quite as much as they were when Ty was younger, they are in nearly daily contact via texts. Ty knows she can count on Karen to support and listen to her. Ty recently turned 18 and is set to graduate from high school in June. She plans to attend the cosmetology vocational program. Guess who has a nearly 20-year career in cosmetology? We couldn't be happier to have created such an enduring, outstanding, and powerful friendship!

OUR MISSION CONTINUES

As New Jersey collectively mobilizes to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, our agency continues to serve 1,500 youth like Little Sister Meghan with one-to-one mentoring relationships, and your support is more vital than ever. Please consider making a donation to Big Brothers Big Sisters now at mentornj.org. Your gift will have a BIG impact at a crucial time!



THE BIG WAIT

Dwight is a smart, social and active 14 year-old boy. He enjoys playing basketball, football, video games, and going to the trampoline park. Dwight is a big brother to his two younger siblings, and would love to have a Big Brother himself!

Become A Big at
www.mentornj.org/be-a-big

OUR MISSION PARTNERS Want to be a Mission Partner? To learn, more contact us at 732.544.2224

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MENTORING SAVES LIVES

Suicide and depression are on the rise in New Jersey, according to the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Teen girls are almost three times as likely as boys to experience significant bouts of depression. And in 2017, there were 100 documented suicides in New Jersey among 15- to 24-year olds. A recent Pew survey revealed about 70% of teens ages 13 to 17 said anxiety and depression are a "major problem." According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in five teens ages 13 to 18 are living with a severe mental disorder.

Jean E. Rhodes, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring at the University of Massachusetts, states that mentoring programs should continue to target the full range of issues like avoidance of risky and delinquent behaviors and commitment to learning, but mental health and wellness are particularly important priorities. Many youths are experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and social, emotional, and behavioral struggles that impede their academic performance and other upstream goals. This is often why they are referred to mentoring programs like ours in the first place. Dr. Rhodes states, "Mentoring programs appear to be particularly successful in moving the needle on depression in vulnerable youth."

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

Little Brother Jeremiah is 15-years old and is being raised by his single father. He has been matched with his Big Brother Dwight for over 3 years! Jeremiah is a freshman in high school and wants to go to school to become an architect. He appreciates that his Big Brother encourages him to do well in school and is always willing to help him to reach his goals. Jeremiah and Dwight visited Rutgers University together, and Jeremiah really liked the tour. Jeremiah has shared how much he enjoys his time with Dwight and looks forward to the great memories they will continue to make!



HEALTHY EATING WORKSHOP



Biggs and Littles at our Workplace Mentoring Program at BMW recently learned about healthy eating and how to keep your body fit and strong. Littles cut and pasted foods from the healthy food groups onto a plate of their own to create a tasty and wholesome meal!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO OUR MARCH MATCHES

- Big Sister Donna & Little Sister Stephanie **7 Years**
- Big Brother Kenneth & Little Brother Dane **6 Years**
- Big Sister Jess & Little Sister Tyrah **5 Years**
- Big Sister Laurie & Little Sister Aliyah **5 Years**
- Big Sister Erica & Little Sister Camryn **5 Years**
- Big Brother Anthony & Little Brother Tajae **5 Years**
- Big Sister Marisa & Little Sister Amanda **5 Years**
- Big Brother Kemar & Little Brother Zion **5 Years**
- Big Brother Ernest & Little Brother Dreveon **4 Years**
- Big Sister Venitta & Little Sister Ariana **4 Years**
- Big Sister Kaetlynn & Little Sister Milagros **4 Years**
- Big Brother Anthony & Little Brother Torin **4 Years**
- Big Brother Bill & Little Brother Brett **4 Years**
- Big Sister Daphne & Little Sister Madison **4 Years**
- Big Sister Alexandra & Little Sister Maleah **4 Years**
- Big Brother Ernest & Little Brother Dreveon **4 Years**
- Big Sister Jacqueline & Little Sister Daniella **3 Years**
- Big Sister Aimee & Little Sister Julia **3 Years**
- Big Sister Jeannie & Little Sister Mayte **3 Years**
- Big Sister Michelle & Little Sister Audrina **3 Years**
- Big Brother Tom & Little Brother Yaden **3 Years**
- Big Sister Sharon & Little Sister McKayla **2 Years**
- Big Sister Dawn & Little Sister Erin **2 Years**
- Big Sister Victoria & Little Sister Miah **2 Years**
- Big Brother Peter & Little Brother Raheem **2 Years**
- Big Sister Katie & Little Sister Destani **2 Years**
- Big Sister Charlayne & Little Sister Alexandra **1 Year**
- Big Sister Samira & Little Sister Vidhi **1 Year**
- Big Sister Lynne & Little Sister Brianna **1 Year**
- Big Brother Omari & Little Brother John **1 Year**
- Big Brother Stephen & Little Brother Joseph **1 Year**
- Big Sister Heather & Little Sister Nariyah **1 Year**
- Big Sister Elyse & Little Sister Karla **1 Year**