

**LETTER FROM BIG SISTER OF THE YEAR: SANDY KUTZING**

**M**y best childhood friend was a Big which is how I learned about Big Brothers Big Sisters. I kept meaning to sign up but continued putting it off telling myself I was too busy. One day I was listening to a podcast about the importance of mentoring and the impact it can have in a child's life. I was really moved by the stories in the podcast and realized I could be that stable, supportive adult for a child in need. Fast forward to today, I have been happily matched with my Little Sister, Eleanor, for almost 9 years.



Eleanor and I have done a variety of activities in our years together and it has been incredible watching her grow and embrace trying new things. There have been some monumental outings – her first time in New York City, seeing her favorite band in concert, going to Rutgers Day for her first college campus visit, and going on the BBBS fishing trip. The repeat outings that we particularly enjoy are baking together while listening to music or grabbing a coffee and going for walks just to chat.

One thing Eleanor and I really enjoy doing together is volunteering. During the start of the pandemic, we brainstormed how we could help and came up with the idea to put together goody bags for the heroes at a local hospital. We raised \$2,700 and put together totes filled with snacks, candy, gift cards, lotions, hand sanitizer, and some cards from the community.



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Eleanor is an extremely caring soul and always looking for ways to help others. She has been a major influence on me. Spending time with her is the perfect reason for me to stop working and enjoy some local fun, culture, and nature.

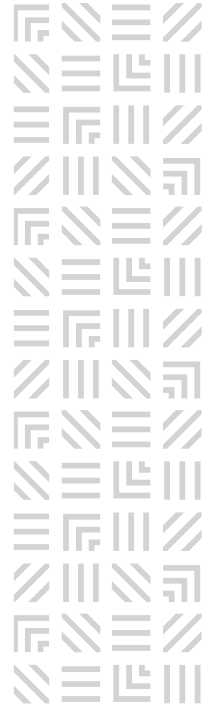
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Since I've known Eleanor, she has gone from a timid and emotional kid to a bold young woman who knows there is a future out there for the taking and she is determined to find her success. **I don't take credit for her accomplishments; she was always capable of achieving, she just needed a little push to realize her potential and some exposure to more of the world.** Sometimes it's hard to tell if I'm making an impact as a Big or if her growth would have happened regardless of my presence, but it does feel amazing when Eleanor talks about paying it forward someday by becoming a Big.

Thank you, Big Brothers Big Sisters, for the honor of being named Big Sister of the Year. **My success as a Big would not be possible without Eleanor, so I share this honor with her.** We are proud to represent the agency and the organization, and we hope our story will inspire and encourage others.



**SANDY & ELEANOR**  
Big Sister & Little Sister  
of the Year



## A LETTER FROM BIG BROTHER OF THE YEAR: PETE MCGUIGAN

It was my wife who initially encouraged me to apply to Big Brothers Big Sisters. Knowing that I had always wanted a son, my wife suggested I volunteer as a Big after the birth of our fourth daughter. She knew I was partial to athletics and outdoor activities and that those interests might serve a young boy who needed a male role model well.



I knew I wanted to become a Big Brother who would provide a lifetime of support to a child. But there is never a guarantee two people will develop the type of bond necessary to last one year, much less over a decade. Twelve years later, I am honored to say that there has never been a time when the relationship with my Little Brother Daniel felt forced or insincere.



Over the course of our friendship, I've been surprised at the tremendous influence Daniel has had on my life. I recall a conversation Daniel and I had when he was 8 years old. We were driving and had just passed an eighteen-wheel truck when he asked me if truck drivers make a lot of money. I said, yes, and he replied that he wanted to be a truck driver when he grew up because he wanted to buy a "house with stairs" just like my house. My response was, "OK, what do you think you need to get a house with stairs?" He said you probably need a lot of money. I agreed and asked him how he thought you go about getting a lot of money. The conversation progressed until we made the connection between education and the qualifications required to

secure a job that could lead to that "house with stairs". It was after that conversation that I knew I was involved in a program that changed lives, both his and mine.

“ Daniel’s presence in my life has taught me to slow down and has deepened my sense of appreciation for the simpler things in life. ”

It's been an honor to experience a fast friendship based on fun shared activities turning into a strong bond. Daniel was a shy, respectful 6-year-old boy in April 2010 when I first met him and over the years he has transformed into a confident and thriving young man who seeks out opportunities to help others.

I believe our friendship and years of fun and influential times together exemplify all the good that comes from providing a caring adult in the life of a young person. This Spring, I look forward with great anticipation to attending his High School graduation. I'm so excited to see what Daniel does with the rest of his life and I look forward to being a part of it.

It is an honor to be named Big Brother of the Year for this incredible organization. Not only am I a volunteer mentor, but I also serve on the Governance Board. I can wholeheartedly say that this organization has changed my life and the lives of so many children and teens through one-to-one mentoring. I invite you to join me and BBBS in igniting potential for local children.



### PETE & DANIEL

Big Brother & Little Brother  
of the Year

