

Profiles in Caring

People who connect through Big Brothers Big Sisters

Courtney and Sarah

It all started with lunch!

Sarah Leonetti works at New Directions Consulting in North Bennington and she's pleased her boss gave her the opportunity to be a Lunchtime Mentor.

She spent an hour each week visiting Courtney at Catamount School and having fun. "It changed my work week," Sarah said. "I had something to look forward to and a chance to relax and be a kid again, too!"

Sarah says it's easy to see the change taking place as the pair grows closer together. "If I don't see Courtney for a week or two, I really miss her." As a result, when the school term ended, Sarah decided to mentor Courtney on a regular basis so they could continue to build their friendship. Now they meet in the community instead of at school, and they do a variety of things they both enjoy.

"Once our dog, Chevy, was sick, so Courtney and I brought him to the vet, where she was able to hear his heart beat, and we got to tour the new veterinary hospital facility. It was exciting for both of us, as Courtney wants to be a vet when she grows up.

Another time, we went to the Pownal Fair and it was neat to see how Courtney chose what she wanted to do at the busy fair with the money she had earned.

"Our relationship is fun and we're well matched, so it has been rewarding to me. I think Courtney enjoys the opportunity to spend time together. I know it makes a difference to her, too!"



Big Brothers Big Sisters

It's about

the children...

J.P and Robert

J.P. was in 4th grade when he received his Big Brother match. The school guidance counselor identified him as a child-at risk because of excessive school absences, poor test results, and negative attitude to schoolwork, so he was paired with a man who could come once a week for an hour to have lunch, play games, read, and just hang out.

At nine years old, J.P. was hungry for adult attention. His parents had divorced and he was in the process of attending a different school each year. He had a difficult home life and benefited from additional support.

"I came to know a smart, active boy, who was getting lost in the process of growing up," said his mentor, who has been meeting with him for more than a year now. "J.P. is very thoughtful and caring. We have a lot of fun together."

"Week after week, J.P. always had the school hot lunch and I brought my lunch box. We'd eat and then play games and talk. Then one day J.P. brought in a brand new lunch box like mine. I realized I'm having an impact.

"His attendance is improving and he knows I think a lot of him. In the summer, we did things together that were new for him, like go to the hardware store, have lunch on a college campus, and just walk down Main Street feeling like a million bucks."



Make a difference

You'll never be the same...

And neither will they.

Tiffany and Miriam

Mentor Miriam Davis had time to give, and she wanted to give it to a child who could use it. So she got involved with BBBS about a year-and-a-half ago, pairing up with her "Little," Tiffany.

Miriam grew up with three sisters but they don't live close to each other now and can't visit like before.

"Tiffany is like my little sister," Miriam said. "If I want to go out, I'll give her a call. She fills a huge part of life for me. We do crafts, go out to lunch or to the movies, and we like to have a girls' night out now and then."

The pair isn't always on the go. They also enjoy deepening their relationship just by being together. "Tiffany likes coming over and we'll make hot cocoa and sit and read books together in front of the fireplace," Miriam said.

Being a "Big", Miriam says, is being part of the community.

Miriam's husband, Kirk, is also a Big and has been canoeing and having fun with his little, Nick, for nearly a year. Here they are together out on Lake Shaftsbury.

