

Councillor inspired by leadership of girl she mentored as a Big Sister

A guest column from Big Brothers Big Sisters

The Peterborough Examiner · 18 Aug 2020 · A5 · MARK SHUWERA If you have a story to share about your experience with our agency, please email mark.shuwera@bigbrothersbigsisters.ca.

Heather Watson serves as a councillor in Douro–Dummer Township, after years as a volunteer and organizer who served on numerous boards. It was no surprise, based on her history of community service, that Heather approached us to become a “Big” several years ago.



Conversely, Heather was very surprised at the positive impact that it had on her.

Her son was early in his teenage years and she was looking for some experiences that would help her have some “girl fun” and explore the community through a different lens.

“I found myself with more free time and was looking to get out and do things,” she says. “I’ve always enjoyed the energy and resilience of children and youths, so becoming a Big seemed like a natural fit.”

Successful matches often lead to not just companionship, but also mentorship. Heather undoubtedly had a positive impact on her Little but she learned many lessons from her Little also.

“My Little was, and continues to be, a confident, brave and organized person. She would often take the lead in setting up activities for us to do. It amazed me at the leadership that she demonstrated, especially considering what she was going through personally.

“Her strength and enthusiasm were inspiring to me and others around her. She made friends everywhere we went and was a leader in her school. I would often think about when I was her age and how much courage it would have taken for me to be as strong as she was.

“Our activities were varied but always an adventure. Some of our favourite things would be just grabbing some ice cream or going for a walk. We also occasionally scored some tickets to events and activities through Big Brothers Big Sisters which I thought was so generous from local organizations who would donate extra tickets.

“It was particularly fun for me to have an opportunity to go on a class trip; it really allowed me to see how loved and welcoming my Little was and how she was regarded among her peers.”

Heather’s Little aged out of the program and the two are still in touch. When asked if she would do it again Heather responded without hesitation, “Absolutely, my schedule is a little inconsistent right now, but I look forward to one day being a Big again.”