

Changing lives—one story at a time

The impact a Mentor can have is real. We hope these stories from Mentees inspire you to start something by becoming a donor, volunteer or enrolling a child.

It's Not Brain Surgery

Iman gets an education in life from Omar.



"Iman knows all the parts of the brain, and I haven't even taught that lesson yet," his science teacher told Iman's mother, Salima. Salima replied "Really? But he's only in sixth grade." Then Salima remembered that Iman's Big Brother Omar is a doctor, and a smile spread across her face.

Salima is a single mother and works days, evenings and so her free time is limited. "I'm a bit older, and because of my work schedule, I'm always so wiped out that I don't have the energy to spend playing with

Iman."

Iman remembers, "I wanted to be with someone because I was really lonely. I just wanted a guy to talk to and play with."

Omar, Iman's mentor is a doctor who has taught Iman about persistence. He continually encourages Iman to try his hardest, no matter the outcome. "Omar says you should never give up," says Iman.

After earning a 92 percent average in school, Iman's self-confidence has blossomed. Iman has very high aspirations, but Omar has also taught him to focus. "He sort of explained how hard it may be to have too many aspirations and that I should do what I do best," Iman says.

"It's a phenomenal privilege to be a part of Big Brothers Big Sisters. On my part, it's so comforting to know my child will be somewhere for four hours having a great time with someone who is making such a positive impact in his life. That's worth its weight in gold," says Salima.

"Since I met Omar," says Iman, "I have gone places and seen things that I didn't even know existed. I see Omar as my real big brother—I count him as family."

Emotionally Rich

Cindy and Kate: Friends for Life



Cindy and her Big Sister, Kate see eye-to-eye, but not just because they are both under 5 feet tall. The pair have so much in common that it's as if they've been friends for their entire lives.

"Maybe she doesn't want to tell mom and dad everything," her stepdad Leroy explains. "She needed her own time, her own getaway."

Oftentimes, Kate will be on her way to run an errand and call Cindy to see if she'd like to tag along for the ride. One Saturday afternoon, Kate took Cindy shopping to find a birthday present for her little brother, then accompanied Cindy to the birthday party. They speak both English and Spanish together, enjoy basketball and have gone to a Phoenix Mercury game, Arizona's professional women's team. They've been skating, enjoy backyard BBQs, and last summer, they went swimming together. **But more than anything, the pair enjoy their visits to the bookstore. "It's somewhere I can talk to her more," Cindy explains.**

"What are the objectives in parenting?" Leroy asks. "You want your child to grow up and be confident with good self esteem, do well academically and financially, and treat themselves and others well. **In my opinion, signing up your child for Big Brothers Big Sisters is one of the best things you can do because it will help your child grow up to be rich emotionally, economically and spiritually.**"

Carrying the Flag Together

Jack lost his father, but found a role model in Matt.



Eight years after Jack lost his father in the terrorist attacks on New York City on September 11, 2001, he ran in the Tunnel to Towers race with his Big Brother Matt, holding a flag high in honor of his father's memory.

Their story begins a few years ago, when Jack's mother, Denise, was worried that her two sons, Michael and Jack, would not have a strong male role model in their lives. Once her two boys were old enough, the New York City Fire Department, where their father was a 10-year veteran, approached Denise to see if she would be interested in working with Big Brothers Big Sisters to find Big Brothers for the two boys. Since they did not have close family members to fill the void, Denise began to investigate and Jack was paired with Matt, a New York City fire fighter.

"You can't replace a dad," Denise says, "but it's really important to have a guy in your life who is there just for you. That is something that Big Brothers Big Sisters gave back to my family. Matt is not going to be his dad, and Jack knows that. But no matter what, Matt is Jack's one outlet."

In honor of the 343 NYC firefighters who lost their lives during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Tunnel to Towers run begins in Brooklyn, passes through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel and finishes at Ground Zero in Manhattan. This past year, Jack—now 9 years old—ran by his Big Brother's side, carrying a flag together. "It was pouring rain, but when Matt held the flag it was really nice because it had my dad's picture on it," recalls Jack.

Denise reflects on her family's relationship with Big Brothers Big Sisters: "I'd love for my kids to be able to give back one day from the experience they've had. **If you feel it in your heart, you should become a part of Big Brothers Big Sisters, as a donor or volunteer. My children and I know how lucky we are to have Big Brothers Big Sisters as part of our lives.**"