

Superheroes Need Not Apply

Big Brother Ed Zeagler and Christopher

When I first met my Little Brother, I was 57 years old, and he was 10. The Big Brothers Big Sisters caseworker introduced me to Christopher and his mother in their living room, and we both signed on for a year-long commitment. I took him out to lunch, we talked for a while, and I guess you could say he decided to keep me-- that was eight years ago. I'm still his Big Brother, and I will be until he ages out of the program this year. Then, I'll just be his friend.

To be honest, when we started out I didn't have any idea what we would do together or what we were supposed to accomplish, but it turns out there was no need for any kind of game plan. Being a mentor is just about spending some quality time with a kid who needs some attention, and the rest just comes naturally. We'd go to ball games, movies, hiking, or get together with other Big Brothers Big Sisters Bigs and Littles. Sometimes we'd just go out to lunch and catch up. It didn't matter what we were doing, as long as we were spending time together.

They won't be making a movie about me and Christopher any time soon. I didn't single-handedly save him from a life on the street, or swoop in and do something dramatic to turn his life around. I just try to set a good example, and I listen. I know he won't remember all of the things I've said to him, but he will remember how I made him feel: important, capable, and worthy.

It doesn't take a superhero to be a mentor. You just have to be able to recognize something special in a child, and that's one of the easiest things there is to do. Christopher is ready to join the Marines when he graduates from high school this spring. As a former Marine myself, I'm proud of him, but then again, I'd be proud of him no matter what he decided to do.

If you've ever thought about volunteering with Big Brothers Big Sisters or any other cause, stop worrying about your time. I wasn't entirely sure I'd have time to mentor Christopher at first, but it wasn't long before I was scheduling things around my time with him, instead of the other way around. You both fall into place before you know it.

When volunteers step up and take time to show a kid he's special, it helps open up the world for him, gives him confidence, and gives him extra support. Each Big Brothers Big Sisters match helps create a stronger kid, making better choices and going farther in life because they learn to believe in themselves. Christopher is a bright and confident young man, and now he's become a Big Brother through a special program with Big Brothers Big Sisters. He's proof when there are more strong kids out there, our community grows up stronger. Call Big Brothers Big Sisters today at 615-329-9191 or visit mentorakid.org to become a mentor—it's the most natural investment you can make.



Big Brother Ed Zeagler and Christopher at Christopher's graduation from Enterprise Leadership Academy last spring