

Isaac Conner and Donald "Trey"

When Isaac Conner moved to Nashville in 2004, the attorney with the law firm of Lewis King wanted to make time in his schedule to work with kids.

"Being a lawyer, and with those time demands, I wasn't sure how much time I had to give to a group of kids, but I knew I could make time to mentor a kid," says Isaac, 30, a Knoxville native and graduate of UT-Chattanooga and UT-Knoxville Law School.

Isaac knew of Big Brothers Big Sisters by reputation, and submitted his request to be matched. Isaac, who was impressed by the careful background check performed by the agency, was eager to be matched and embark on this journey.

About this same time, 10-year-old Donald, who goes by "Trey," and his mother were beginning the process with Big Brothers Big Sisters. Trey's mother knew she needed an additional positive influence in Trey's life, and Isaac was the just the type of role model they were hoping to meet. Isaac and Trey were soon matched together, and they have been friends for two years with remarkable results.

"Trey is a bright kid who doesn't necessarily do as well in school as he could because of some reading issues," says Isaac. "I know that if he doesn't get the help he needs now, he may not ever get it."

Isaac says he and Trey immediately hit it off, and spent much of their first year building a trusting relationship centered on activities they liked to do together: such as going out to eat, and going to ballgames - including basketball games coached by Isaac, a former player at UT-Chattanooga.

"At heart, I'm a big kid myself... so we can joke, laugh and have a good time," says Isaac. "After the first year, we worked more on the education side of it."

Isaac recently set up a meeting between Trey's mother, his teacher and the principal of his school to talk about his need for extra help with reading. Isaac has focused some of his time with Trey to work on this important subject.

"I am willing to have fun with him, but I also want to help Trey work on a vision for his life," says Isaac. "He is a responsible young man who thinks for himself. He comes from a loving home and I just want to do my part."

Isaac says he sees the time commitment as minor, despite his busy work schedule. And, to Isaac, the importance of that minor commitment of time in Trey's life is critical.

"Big Brothers Big Sisters is flexible," says Isaac. "It's up to me to devote the time needed to Trey. I would say to others who might be on the fence about becoming a Big to consider that you're talking about one hour a week. And consider the kids on that waiting list. Everybody has an obligation to give something back. I'm just doing what I can."

