

My name is Nathan Waller and I am a Little Brother – a part of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Victoria, and I could not be happier to be a part of such an amazing organization. I wanted to share my experience that I have had with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, but to do so, I just need to provide a little bit of background.

I was born a twin brother and we lived with our Dad and Grandmother growing up. I saw my Mom and Sisters on the weekend and my Grandpa very often. I grew up like any other child: going to school, playing games with friends, after school activities, track and field, lots of video games. I remember when my Dad was the coach on our T-Ball team; the group picture still hangs in Spelts in Saanichton, We would go ice skating, swimming at the lake, playing video games.

And then my Dad passed away when my brother and I were 7. My Dad's sister, my aunt, then moved to help our Grandmother with two growing boys.

A year or so later, my Grandpa died. And the fatherly figures in my life were gone. But I still had my brother, Aunt, and Grandma. And for a while it was the four of us. And we adopted our dog, Shadow. My brother and I had good friends; we kept busy with school, youth groups, and the neighbourhood kids.

Eventually, my Aunt and Grandma signed us both up for Big Brothers and Big Sisters. And from there I was apart an organization that would affect my life in so many positive ways. My brother had his Big Brother and became much more active. He started getting out of the house going to car races with his Big's family to watch his Big race. He bought hiking boots and was beyond excited to start using them. They would race RC cars. My brother said he liked having two families: my Grandmother, Aunt, and I. And his Big Brother and his Wife and children.

And I met my Big Brother, Simon, around 11 years old. It was funny because Simon has been, and still is, such a ridiculous role model. He puts perfection into everything he does. It was a good contrast; he got me out of the house to become more active, and I got him inside to just hang around. We would go hiking, mountain biking, work on house chores like painting, or building something. He would show me his motorbikes, play games like risk, or just watch our favourite TV show LOST, and talk on the phone before, during, and after the episodes. He was also just as geeky as I was and we could geek out over new technology for hours. His busy life showed me a

lot about adulthood and I watched and learned from Simon as he only became more ridiculous as life went on.

And life did go on. My family, friends, and Big Brothers keeping me busy. A little while later, Big Brothers and Big Sisters offered me a 10 day sailing trip up and down Vancouver's island west coast, on a tall ship through the organization S.A.L.T.S. It was one of the best summers of my life. I learned the basics of sailing, saw beautiful beaches, and experienced amazing hot springs. I met people that I still have on Facebook many years later. It is a memory of mine that would not have been possible without Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

Simon and I continued to grow. We would take advantage of the many events put on by Big Brothers Big Sisters. Barbeques, picnics, and ice skating. By then though, our relationship grew bigger than Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Simon and his wife moved to Vancouver to go back to school. I got to go visit him from time to time and this opened up a whole new realm of adventure; taking the ferry, seeing Vancouver sights, his enormous school, and the expansive laboratories. Even better though, I was lucky enough to see firsthand this loving couple realize their careers, persevere through years of school, and see their intense dedication to obtain their dream.

Meanwhile, I was going through High School with Big Brothers and Big Sisters checking in, and each time I had the pleasure to wow them with the success of Simon and I. They told me of a scholarship opportunity that I should apply for. It had two requirements: maintain a relationship with my Big and the organization, and obtain a certain, realistic, grade average. It seemed obtainable, so I did and a few months later I was selected to be awarded the CIBC Youth Vision Scholarship valued at \$36,000 to the school of my choice, in the field of my choice. Part of that money was guaranteed summer work at a YMCA establishment. One year, I was a Youth Camp Counsellor and had the wonderful opportunity to work at a summer camp for an entire summer. Suddenly, post-secondary was a reality. I began to think of life after high school and what I wanted to do. And that brings us to today.

My Brother's Big Brother is happy with his family and has had a beautiful son very recently, growing their family one more. Simon has lived up to his reputation. From when I met him to now, he has moved from working as a part of a construction

company, to moving to Vancouver and getting a degree in dentistry, and now lives in Parksville with his wife, who is now a nurse, and he has been working as a dentist for the last few years. Two years ago, they had their beautiful first child Olivia. And I, Uncle Nathan, have just turned 21 years old in November. I applied for college and have finished my first two years. I've worked as a summer camp counsellor, an electronic retail salesman, in the storage business, and recently as an insurance advisor. I've just begun my third year at the University of Victoria and I'm on my way to becoming a High School Teacher.

And here I am, writing this letter, proudly representing Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Victoria. This organization gave me things that I may have never had had in my life: a friendship and mentor that I can look up to and learn from, the experience of sailing the sea, and the ability to attend college and university and pursue a career.

I wanted to say this to show, as a prime example, of all the good Big Brothers and Big Sisters do for families. I say all of this because I want to share my story and hopefully inspire people to become a part of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Most importantly, however, I say all of this because I am so thankful to Big Brothers and Big Sisters and all of their supporters for all the good they have brought into my life.