

Fredericton waiting list: 36

# Big Brothers are looking for student volunteers

Imagine you grew up without a father. Your life would have been different from what it was, very possibly your current situation would be other than as it is. Some boys do grow up in families which are, for one reason or another, incomplete. They have no father.

No doubt everyone has heard at one time or another statements by psychologists concerning the adult male influence during a boy's formative years. It is commonly thought that for a child's natural development the influence of both parents is desirable. Also, many people believe a fatherless boy is more apt to get into trouble than a non-fatherless boy. The Big Brothers is a world wide organization attempting to help with this problem.

Bill Lifford is the Executive Director of The Big Brothers Association of Fredericton. He is constantly attempting to match boys with big brothers.

When some people think of various civic organizations they think of money. The Big Brothers does not ask for money. All it asks for is time. Mr. Lifford said that it is an organization which is "most misunderstood". It is not a club or anything of that sort. It is merely a functional unit for the dispersment of male volunteers for the benefit of boys without a father.

The general idea is for a big brother to spend some time with his "little brother". In this way the boy feels the influence of an adult male. In some cases, the boy derives guidance from his big brother which may help keep him from getting into trouble.

The standard procedure is for a big brother and little brother to spend approximately four hours together per week. What is done is up to the big brother and his charge. They may go to see a hockey game or a movie, they may go to the park, or they may stay inside playing checkers or cards. Other possibilities are fishing or camping trips. There is no limit to the relationship. This is up to the man and boy involved.

Currently there are approximately 50 boys registered with The Big Brothers of Fredericton. Thirty six of these are on the waiting list. There are no big brothers available for them. When asked in an interview on CHSR "does it help?" Mr. Lifford said, "Very definitely". He said that only approximately 12 to 15 per cent of the little brothers get into trouble.

The requirements for someone to become a big brother are that he likes children and that he likes helping out. The only age requirement for becoming a big brother is that he be at least eighteen. Mr. Lifford said that the youngest big brother in Fredericton is nineteen or twenty. The oldest is sixty four.

Mr. Lifford is currently conducting a campaign on the UNB campus in an attempt to recruit big brothers from the UNB student body. Four of Fredericton's big brothers are currently students at UNB. Since November, two UNB students had applied to become big brothers due to the campaign. Mr. Lifford pointed out in an interview that though some students are only in town for a short time, some fatherless boys are also only in town for a short

time. In this way someone may be able to provide a boy with some companionship even if it is for only a short while. The average relationship may last for several years, since boys are eligible to be "little brothers", from the age of eight to fourteen.

As of September 1976 there were 116 Big Brothers agencies across Canada, 5,483 little brothers with big brothers, 2,696 boys on the waiting list, and 5,313 big brothers. The reason for the difference between the number of big brothers and the number of matched little brothers is that some big brothers have two little brothers.

There were 839 big brothers going through the screening process and waiting to be matched

with little brothers.

Big Brothers was started in New York in 1904. It started in Canada in 1921 and became a national Canadian organization in 1964. The Big Brothers Association of Fredericton was started in 1966 by a committee of the Kiwanis Club. It was incorporated in 1968 and came under the United Way in 1970. The Oromocto area became involved in Big Brothers in 1972. There are also Big Brothers agencies in Moncton, Saint John, Sydney, Kings County, Halifax and Charlottetown.

The United Way is the main source of funding for The Big Brothers Association of Fredericton. Last year the association received a \$600 grant from The

House of Hay. Up to approximately three years ago it received an annual grant of \$300 from the Kiwanis Club. Mr. Lifford added that the first vice president of the Kiwanis Club is automatically a member of Board of Directors of The Big Brothers Association of Fredericton.

Within the Fredericton-Oromocto area there are possibly 200 to 250 fatherless boys, many of these not registered with The Big Brothers. Possible reasons for their not being registered are pride, or a lack of knowledge of the association. Some mothers think that there is a long waiting list for a boy to be matched with a big brother and feel that there is no point in registering their boys.

Though the waiting list is extensive, it is operated on a priority system based on need.

The national office for Big Brothers is located in Hamilton, Ontario. The purpose of this office is to aid local Big Brother agencies establish themselves. Local agencies have to be well organized before they are allowed to actually commence operations.

The main requirement for becoming a big brother is a dedication to help a boy. The core of the Big Brothers program is that natural urge to help others. The Big Brothers concept is one man, one boy. One definite requirement for a boy to be registered with The Big Brothers is that he wants a big brother.

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