



## Former Little shares his story....

When I was 9 years old I walked through the doors of the Big Brothers Association to meet Ray for the first time. I am now 28 years old and I still get that sense of excitement each and every time we do something together.

My name is David Longley and I am a living, breathing example of how important the Big Brother Association is in the lives of the people it touches. Due to extenuating circumstances I found myself a nine-year-old boy, growing up without a strong male role model. Right from the start Ray and I clicked together as Little Brother / Big Brother. He may have started out taking me for ice cream, or throwing the ball around, or catching a game or two but this soon turned into inviting me as part of his family on camping trips, hockey tournaments and other family holidays. I soon turned from being Ray's Little Brother to becoming a part of the Sanford family. Ray, his wife, Cindy and their daughter Crystal welcomed me with open arms and to this day treat me like another member of the family. We may have met 19 years ago but to this day we are still playing ball together and still hanging out together like best friends and I plan on keeping it like that forever.

As a child I did not realize the impact that getting involved with a Big Brother would have. At that time Ray was an adult who came over and took me to great places and with whom I had a lot of fun. However, looking back on it as an adult, Ray was the most important person in my life in making me the man I am today. He taught me about right and wrong and stood beside me as I struggled through the growing pains of life. He helped me to see where I went wrong and how to learn from my mistakes so I may come away from them a better person. I do not know where I would be without the guiding influence of my Big Brother.

Ray was there for all the milestones of my life. He watched as I became more and more involved in hockey and baseball, as I got my drivers licence and as I graduated high school and later college. He came with me as I searched for my first home, and helped carry boxes as I moved in. He has been there for every birthday, every Christmas and to this day not a single New Year's clock strikes midnight without his best wishes for a happy year to come. Most recently on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 I stood waiting for my bride to walk down the aisle and there was no one I would have considered having stand beside me as my best man than Ray. I said it best during my wedding speech that same night when I explained, "I could not have asked for a better best man to stand beside me on my wedding day as Ray is the definition of a best man and a best friend. I am forever grateful for what Ray and his family have done for me and that we will forever be a family."

Being a part of the Big Brother Program has impacted me in a way that I cannot even begin to express with words. As I continue on my pathway of life I know that it will be with the continued support and love of Ray and his family. The Big Brother's Association did not just supply me with a male role model it provided me with a loving, nurturing family and friendship that will last a lifetime and for that I will be forever grateful. Thank you Big Brother's Association for bringing Ray into my life and consequently playing an integral role in making me the man I am today.

David  
Little Brother