

# Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin in need of local volunteers

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin and District are putting out a call for volunteers in Shelburne and North Dufferin communities to help find matches for local children sitting on their waitlist.

According to the local chapter, in Shelburne, there are currently five children who have been matched with a big brother or big sister, and there are seven children on the waitlist waiting for their match.

While it's not unusual to have children on the waitlist to be matched with a big brother or big sister, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin and District executive director Nancy Stallmach says the local district hasn't seen many volunteers coming from the Shelburne community.

"We think we could match these children more quickly if we could get some more volunteers coming in," said Stallmach.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BBBS) Canada was founded in 1913 and looks to take kids facing adversity and pair them with a caring mentor, whom they usually spend a few hours every week or two with.

"What's true about our program is that it allows children who might be isolated and having a hard time, to feel connected to their community and it sets them on a much more positive path in life; that can be a very positive thing for Shelburne," said Stallmach.

Shelburne resident Morgan Bennington has been a part of the local Big Brothers and Big Sisters program as a mentor for the last three years. Inspired by her own parent's experiences as mentors in the program, Bennington joined during her first year of university and was paired with her little sister, Brooklyn.

"Growing up I saw how important it was to give back to the community and I wanted to help anyone who might need a bit of extra support because I realized how lucky I was to have a good net around me," said Bennington.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters works to match the 'big' and 'little' pairings with similar interests and encourages low-cost or no-cost activities. Some of the activities that Bennington has shared with her little sister include hiking, playing basketball, watching movies, and making crafts.

"It's way more focused on the connection that you build and the friendship than the materialistic stuff," said Bennington.

She added that the mentorship experience is not just enriching for the children but also for the adult volunteers.

"Despite a busy schedule it's something that I look forward to, it's a fun time for me as well. It's really nice to have this connection and to see her grow up; you come to care about these individuals so much and it's so special."

Shelburne residents who are interested in volunteering as a big brother or big sister can fill out an application form on the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin and District website.