# Big Brothers:

# A little commitment can go a long way

rian Cude has been Dan Noguera's big brother since May and both are finding the experience very rewarding.

The two are not relatives however, Cude and Noguera were matched through the Big Brothers of Halton.

Noguera, 11, who has never had the opportunity to meet his father, said he considers Cude a friend.

"When I first met him, I just liked him," he said. He added they get together once or twice a week "to do a lot of stuff together."

He said the match made by the Big Brothers of Halton has been really good. Cude agrees wholeheartedly.

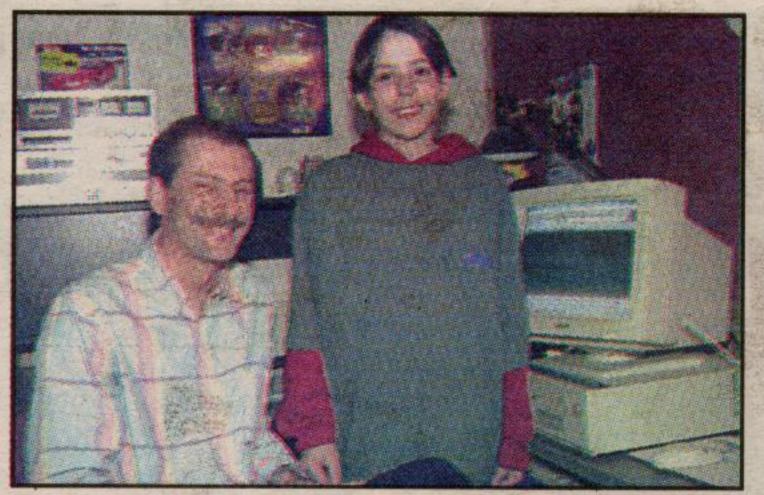
"It is a constant source of recreation with an important purpose behind it," said Cude. Bowling, watching football, movies, and video games are some of the activities the two friends like to do together.

He says when he first met Noguera he was "quiet and not too trusting" but adds he has come a long way since then.

Like all big brothers Cude went through an extensive screening process before he was accepted by the agency, but added "if you had your own child involved in it you would want it that thorough."

Evelyn Gransaull, executive director of Big Brothers of Halton, said potential big brothers must go through six checks including police and medical, and participate in a two-and-a-half hour interview which touches on their lives from childhood through today. Little brothers take a sexual abuse prevention program, and big brothers are trained in how to deal with a boy who tells him he has been sexually abused.

There are about 70 matches between big and little brothers Halton-wide (17 in Halton Hills) and about 40 little brothers are still waiting for a match.



Big Brother Brian Cude and his Little Brother Dan Noguera. Photo by Lisa Tallyn

Across the province recruitment of big brothers is either stagnating or declining, while little brother waiting lists are at record highs.

Gransaull said one of the main reasons for that is the perception some people have of what's involved in being a big brother.

She said many think they have to be a father figure to a troubled child and commit for a long

"It doesn't require four hours a week every week," said Gransaull. "It can take a commitment of as little as twice a month."

Gransaull said the boys waiting for matches are "wonderful little kids" and like all kids some can be "handfuls" she added. She said big and little brothers can actually be friends and share similar interests. A year-long commitment is all that is required, but most matches last about four years. According to statistics 73 per cent of little brothers see their big brothers after their involvement in the program is over.

or those who can't commit one on one Gransaull said the agency also offers a Big Bunch Friendship program. In the program two big brothers are matched with six little brothers and they all get together once a month or so. The participants design their own program around their interests.

Anyone interested in becoming a big brother or in more information on the program should call the Acton office at (519) 853-5902 or (905) 339-2355.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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