

Big Brothers 'come in all shapes and sizes'

Agency looking for a hundred good men

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Staff Writer



Big Brother Ted Thompson takes in a recent hockey game at Mold-Masters SportsPlex with Little Brother Joey, 14. Thompson has been Joey's Big Brother for five years and turned to the program after his wife died. He now considers Joey one of his grandchildren.
Photo by Ted Brown

At first glance, senior citizen Ted Thompson and 14-year-old Joey may not look like your typical Big and Little Brother, but a match like theirs is not so unusual.

"Role models come in all shapes and sizes," says Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton co-ordinator of volunteers, Wendy Somerville. "Big Brothers are regular people. They are bus drivers, teachers, plumbers and grandfathers. I think ultimately you just have to make a positive impact on the life of a child."

The Halton agency has recently launched a campaign to find 100 men across Halton this year to be matched with a boy aged five to 14 for as little as one hour a week.

The need for Big Brothers is particularly great in Halton Hills where there are currently more than 25 boys on a wait-list.

Somerville says it's quite common for empty nesters, like Thompson, to sign up as Big Brothers because they have more time.

"They have a lot to bring to the table," says Somerville. "They really invest, they take it really seriously."

Thompson, who with his late wife Ruth raised five children, has been matched with Joey since May 2003 when Joey was nine years old.

Thompson initially turned to the program out of loneliness after his wife died, and his involvement as a Big Brother has been very rewarding. Today he considers Joey one of his grandchildren.

The two of them usually get together once a week, and just hang out.

They'll go out for dinner, take in a

hockey game, go fishing or Thompson will take Joey skateboarding or snow tubing, to visit a friend, camping, or to visit one of Thompson's sons.

It was through those visits to Thompson's son, who is "hockey crazy," that Joey became very interested in the sport and Thompson encouraged him to join a local hockey team.

"Ted has never missed a practice. He's

actually purchased second hand equipment for Joey," said Somerville.

They also take in Big Brothers events offered throughout the year such as Blue Jays and Raptors games.

"He's a really good kid," said Thompson of Joey, a Georgetown boy who comes from a single-parent family that has experienced difficult circumstances. "He always says thank you for

things he doesn't have to say thank you for."

Another Big Brother in Halton Hills is Georgetown firefighter and businessman Mark Burger of Spokes 'n Slopes who recently signed on to be an in-school mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton. Burger is featured in the poster for the campaign.

The poster shows Burger fixing a bicycle at his shop with a little brother. Doing things as simple as fixing bikes, shooting hoops or playing video games can be quite typical activities for Big and Little brothers.

"You don't have to change your life to change his is the essence of the campaign," says Somerville. "We want to get across the message to men that being a Big Brother is really about just being a pal to a boy."

The organization asks Big Brothers to provide a three-hour a week commitment to a boy who could benefit from some one-on-one time from an older male.

The boys can be from single parent homes or even from large families where dad is not always available because he may be working shifts.

Somerville says being a Big Brother can be as simple as kicking a ball around or flying a kite.

The organization also has a need for men to serve as In School Mentors to boys. That program requires a one-hour a week commitment during school hours. The two meet one-on-one in the school.

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Halton and volunteering call 905-878-8840 or visit www.bbshalton.ca.

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Building's owner says demolition is best option for Norval store

Continued from pg. 1

"I'm worried about the variances and the road widening," she said.

She doesn't like the look of the building proposed by the owners and would prefer to see a heritage-style building go up.

Dianne Taylor, also of Norval, said the Carpet Palace owners should restore the building.

George Kanichis, an owner of The Carpet Palace, stressed they weren't doing anything wrong.

He said the building isn't designated historical and is ready to fall down.

"The Town is always promoting shop locally and supporting local business," said Kanichis. "We are trying to improve our business to

meet the needs of the community."

He said, "Norval is a little family" and the protest by the residents makes Kanichis feel like he's being attacked by his own family.

The owners went forward with their plans for the property after receiving notification from the Town's Heritage Halton Hills Committee last May that it wouldn't oppose a request for demolition of the property.

Minor variances to the Town's zoning bylaw, site plan approval, a demolition permit and building permit are required before the owners can go ahead with their plans for the property.

The application is to be before the Town's Committee of Adjustment Wednesday, May 7.



A group of Norval residents protest the planned demolition of The Carpet Palace building at the corner of Hwy. 7 and Adamson Street in Norval Friday. The group, led by former Halton Hills mayor Kathy Gastle (right) want the building saved even though the building hasn't been deemed a historical site and Heritage Halton Hills isn't opposed to the demolition.
Photo by Ted Brown

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