

Big Brothers Grow But Not Fast Enough, Meeting Told

At a recent national convention, the Big Brothers of York was cited as "the fastest growing Big Brother organization in North America."

At the annual meeting of the year-old agency, President Edwin Nokes of Richmond Hill told an assembly of about 100 people in Aurora Community Centre that, in spite of its phenomenal growth, the organization still lacks men to act as Big Brothers and is seriously handicapped by a shortage of money to administer the program.

"We have moved through 1970, meeting many problems and solving them and building our service to boys in need," said Mr. Nokes. "We are serving more than four times as many boys now as we were at the start of the year, and we appear to have only two major problems, the lack of men . . . and a shortage of money."

Youth was well represented in the audience of Big Brothers, mothers who are widowed, separated, divorced, or deserted, and their fatherless sons, as well as representatives of social and service agencies in the region, and interested members of the public.

"It seems far easier to obtain public support for rehabilitation services than to obtain money for preventive services," observed Mr. Nokes. "There are many examples of this, but witness multi-million dollar facilities being built in Oakville for children sentenced by the Family Court."

Surely a case can be made to provide a minimum amount of funds to support concerned citizens in carrying out unpaid services designed to arrest the potential problems of unguided boys.

Compare our preventive costs of less than 45 cents per day with treatment costs of up to \$45 per day," Mr. Nokes continued. "The per capita cost of Big Brothers of York's service is \$100 per year as against \$2,000 minimum per year for a child served by the Children's Aid, and up to \$16,000 per year for a child served in a treatment institution. Big Brothers represents an opportunity for the Region of York to invest in a saving of its human potential as well as a saving of money in preventive rather than rehabilitative measures."

The president declared that fatherless boys come to the attention of the police far more than those from complete families.

"As a result, fatherless boys end up in training schools far more than the average. Currently, more than half the boys in Ontario training schools are fatherless."

The list of boys waiting for Big Brother service continues to grow, but with a great growth potential and an interested directorate to search out ways and means of meeting the needs of these boys, Mr. Nokes predicted an aggressive program aimed at expanding professional services in 1971.

"The need for a full-time Big Brother agency in York Region is something the incoming directorate must carefully measure," he declared.

Thanking the community for support received in the year past, Mr. Nokes referred specifically to the service clubs of the region, the boys of St. Andrew's College for financial and moral support. Dr. Wilfred Black who has provided office space in Aurora and Ronalds Federated Limited who has provided facilities in Richmond Hill.

In an informal discussion with Executive Director Glenn Waterhouse, Peter Leyland of Newmarket and Bert Patkau of Queensville told how their relationship as big and little brother had begun and developed, and Bert's mother, Mrs. Jeanne Patkau, explained how it all began.

Bert was surrounded by females, she explained — a mother and three sisters — and as he approached his teens he withdrew more and more from the family, preferring to be by himself in his own room. The only adult he seemed willing to accept was his teacher at school — a man.

A co-worker suggested, then urged Mrs. Patkau to find a Big Brother for Bert.

"And if there is anything worse than a nagging woman it is a nagging man," Mrs. Patkau declared. So she capitulated and approached the Big Brothers.

Mr. Leyland had only recently moved to Newmarket, and thought he would like to get involved in the community. He read an appeal for Big Brothers in a local newspaper and volunteered his services.

There was more to it than that, however. He was "screened" — invited in for an interview, asked about his background, his interests, his reasons for wanting to be a Big Brother. The screening process was not really very terrifying, he hastened to

add. The aim is not only to make sure that the man is of good character, but also to be sure that he will be a good match for his little brother.

Bert, who is "almost 14" told his story.

"First we went out for a Coke and just talked. Sometimes we go bowling and to hockey games, and he took me to the winter carnival. Now we are talking about maybe going camping."

Since meeting Mr. Leyland he has become a rabid Maple Leaf fan and ever interested in his mother in watching games with him on television.

"I'm more interested in sports now," said Bert, "and it's nice to have someone to talk to, to think things through."

It is not surprising that the two should relate so well.

"Is has given me an inner satisfaction," Mr. Leyland said, explaining, "My own father died when I was ten, so I know how a 'little brother' feels, how lonely he is."

Nor have the demands been too great. At first they started out with a regular weekly schedule — Wednesday evening and Saturday. Now meetings are arranged at mutually convenient times and they spent about four to six hours together each week.

"We have a fairly free schedule, and there is very little money involved," Mr. Leyland added to reassure those in the audience who might want to be Big Brothers but fear they might not be able to work it into their budgets of time and money.

And Mrs. Patkau described the changes in her own life since the Big Brothers came into the scene.

"We are more of a family now. Bert spends more time in the living room. He is not so alone."

She has also become involved in organizing a mothers' group which meets monthly in the homes of mothers of the little brothers. They have had speakers from the Family Life Counselling services in Markham and from other agencies and organizations serving families in the region.

In his formal presentation to the meeting, Mr. Waterhouse reported that at the beginning of 1970 the agency was serving ten boys. It is now serving 47.

"Yet, as the number of boys who have Big Brothers increases, so does our waiting list. This is a reflection of the community demand for our service, and an indication of the need for a full-time Big Brother agency in York Region."

Highlights of the year included expansion to the southern half of the county, with establishment of an office in Richmond Hill and the addition of a social worker, Norman Opperman, to the staff. This office, at Ronalds Federated Limited, 225 Yonge Street North, is open on Saturdays only, however.

The Big Brothers of York had their first annual Big Brother-Little Brother bowling tournament in Newmarket, and its first annual winter party with skating, snowmobiling, tobogganing and dinner, thanks to St. Andrew's College in Aurora.

A group counselling service for mothers of little brothers was established with volunteer social worker Mrs. Doreen Wright as co-ordinator.

Big and Little Brothers had their first annual camping weekend at Cedar Beach, Musselman's Lake and an Argo football raffle and Grey Cup Eve Dance raised money to send little brothers to summer camp.

The agency's publicity committee entered a float in the Aurora Santa Claus Parade with the help of both Big and Little Brothers.

The Big Brothers of York was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1970, and has three professional part time workers serving as counsellors, administrators and co-ordinators: Mr. Waterhouse, Mr. Opperman and Lil Dixon. Mothers' group leaders are Mrs. Patkau and Mrs. Doreen Wright.

able to work out a very satisfactory program, matching up older teenage boys with the younger boys.

Some of the Junior Big Brothers had continued to maintain their contact with the agency on graduating from high school and had later become full-fledged Big Brothers.

Even without this special program, he added, "We have made age exceptions if the person is mature enough."

Executive for 1971-72 includes President Rev. Craig Cribar of Newmarket; Past President Edwin Nokes of Richmond Hill; 1st Vice-President Tom Taylor of Newmarket, 2nd Vice-President Norman Stewart of Aurora; Secretary Ernie Batson of Aurora; Treasurer Don Pulcine of Aurora, and Executive Director Glen Waterhouse of Newmarket.

Continuing as directors for a second year are John Graham, John Hissink, and Cam Smith of Richmond Hill; Keith Norris of Newmarket; Ron Wallace of Aurora; William Hodgson, MLA York North, a resident of Kettleby; and John Roberts, MP York Simcoe, who lives in King Township.

The all-male board of directors became worried about the growing strength and aggressiveness of the Women's Liberation movement, Mr. Cribar told the meeting.

"We thought we had better do something fast before we were forced to," he explained as he introduced five new board members — two of them women.

The new directors are Joe Gaspar, Mrs. Marguerite Truman, and John West of Aurora; Peter Nye of Richmond Hill; and Mrs. Margaret Lade of Willowdale.

The business meeting adjourned and coffee and soft drinks were served. The York North Barber Shop Singers entertained with a group of lively and popular selections.

Markham Town Treads Water While Passing Swimming Pool Bylaw

A bylaw designating requirements for construction of private home swimming pools in Markham was passed Tuesday night of last week but not before council spent some time treading water.

Two clauses in the bylaw caused some soulsearching along with some differences of opinion.

The bylaw in its original form specified that any pool must be enclosed by a chain link fence with a one-and-one-half inch mesh or some other enclosure "equivalent" to it. It would also have to be not less than four feet in height and constructed not less than three feet from the pool's edge.

It was the "not less than three feet" from the pool's edge that caused some consternation.

Councillor Norm Tyndall noted that there are different types of commercial pools being sold and pointed out that some wouldn't be able to comply with such a restriction in the bylaw. He favored making no restrictions to how far a fence must be from the pool.

Agreeing was Councillor Jim Jongeneel who stated that a "bylaw should provide adequate protection for residents but it can't be expected to protect against all circumstances. We can't protect people against themselves."

He argued that a child could just as easily hurt itself by climbing a fence and tumbling headfirst onto the concrete border of a pool.

"I'd rather have him take a chance on fracturing his skull than tumbling straight into the pool," commented Councillor Art Bonner who favored the three-foot minimum.

Mr. Jongeneel said the main thing was getting the pool bylaw on the board and "if there are instances in which residents see neighbors not complying with safety regulations, they can get in touch with the municipality. At least we will have a bylaw."

Council finally amended the bylaw to eliminate the three-foot minimum as well as the chain link fence "or equivalent."

It laid down no specifications for a type of fence just as long as it was of sufficient strength to deter any children from getting into the pool area.

In other business, council rejected a bylaw that would have prohibited the discharge of firearms of any type in any part of the municipality.

Councillor Norman Tyndall was particularly opposed to such a bylaw pointing out that there were a lot of farmers in the municipality who used firearms to rid their premises of rodents.

Councillor Keith Kennedy said "this would also prohibit anyone from setting up a rifle range. We should have some kind of control but this isn't the answer."

Mr. Tyndall, while opposed to banning firearms, did want council to prohibit hunting in the entire municipality.

This didn't go over with all of his fellow councillors who defeated the motion.

Hunting is currently permitted in certain areas of Markham. The "firearm" bylaw was sent back for further study.

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