

# Being a “Big” Brother

## Can it help your golf game?

Most of us would agree that being of service to others yields tremendous satisfaction. From my personal experience, I would agree wholeheartedly. I am fortunate to have had and continue to have the opportunity to be of service to others and am grateful to those who have steered me to do so. Ironically, it was golf that set me on this path and would eventually become my career.

In 1995, I was visiting my sister in Arizona and had the opportunity to play a round of golf. I was paired that day with a complete stranger, who was probably in his mid-40's (doesn't seem so old to me now), and off we went for 18 holes. I started off playing well, but as was usually the case, I hit some bad shots, got frustrated, and wondered how I was ever going to shoot in the 80's consistently. Toward the end of the round I realized that it was the same old story again and again. I was trying really hard and not getting any better.

Throughout the round, my playing partner, who was having fun and hitting some great shots, spoke of his life experiences on and off the golf course which included his affiliation with Big Brothers Big Sisters. I had not heard of this organization but it sounded really great. You get matched with a young person from a single parent home and get to go out and have fun. This conversation was the genesis for my involvement with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

You might think that the thought of giving back was what inspired me to become a big. I guess it was in part, but that wasn't the whole story. I was motivated for more selfish reasons - I wanted to be more like my playing partner. I wanted to play like he did on the course and be as happy as he was off of it. This guy had something I wanted and if Big Brothers was the connection, then I would seek it out on my return to New York. Little did I know that this round of golf would have a profound impact on my life.

Later that year, I made my first donation to Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York and in 1997 became a big brother to a young boy in Manhattan. When he turned 17 in 2004, I was matched with my current little brother in Raleigh. In 1999 my involvement as a “Big” inspired me to co-found a charity bike ride from Chicago to New York. The 10-day, 1,000-mile journey was repeated in 2000 and raised over \$250,000 for Big Brother agencies in New York and Chicago. In 1999 I got married and now have two wonderful little guys of my own. In 2000, I decided to change careers and pursue golf, using the game to help others access their potential. My ultimate goal is to use the game to develop youth enrichment programs as a means to improve our community. I am now a PGA Professional living in Raleigh and enjoying “playing to my potential” – thanks to Big Brothers Big Sisters! Now it's my time to give back by contributing my time and effort to serve on the Board of Directors and continue as a Big Brother.

It was a big step for me to become a Big back in 1997, but I am really glad I did. Looking back over the past 12 years, I ask myself what's different. What changed on the links that day and how has my experience as a Big contributed to my own personal growth? I believe my being a Big has not only helped two young men trust more in themselves and their relationships but has

also helped me do the same. I think that in the end it all comes down to trusting ourselves and what we do. It certainly helped my golf game!

***Doug Hodges is a Class A PGA Professional at the Heritage Golf Club and founder of Creative Golf, an organization specializing in corporate and personal performance. He is a husband, father and big brother.***

***For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Triangle, please contact Doug at (919) 623-2258, or visit: [www.bbbstriangle.org](http://www.bbbstriangle.org).***