



Big Brothers Big Sisters®

OF THE BLACK HILLS



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"If you believe in the universe bringing people together, it's like that. It was meant to happen."

—Big Brother, James

When James applied to be a Big, he started the journey to giving a child one of the most valuable gifts he possibly could. He was life-qualified and wanted to spend one-on-one time with a child who needed it. He would become a mother's ally. James would stand in this boy's corner, be on his side, and defend his potential.

This young, bright-eyed, shy boy named Kevin taught himself origami and enjoys math. He is closest to his mother and grandfather. He likes school and loves to play chess. What you don't see in this picture is that this bright boy wanted his pain to end and a very grim situation unfolded in his home several months ago. An unfortunate event had occurred in Kevin's world, and he was left wondering what he did wrong. He was left with an enormous void in his heart and he "didn't want to be a burden" to his mother. Kevin tried to take his own life just before getting matched with James. When the case manager asked if James would still like to mentor this boy, James said, "He needs it now more than ever."

"Having James has helped Kevin get outside his bubble and do fun and exciting things. He can be himself with James, and that has been great to see," says Patricia, Kevin's mom. James said he and Kevin were "equally as awkward in the beginning" and he broke the ice with "dad jokes." James said this became a focal point for them and now Kevin will call him when he's down to hear a dad joke and laugh a little.

Patricia now has an ally; James is linking arms with her and helping to defend the potential of Kevin. Patricia says, "James is willing to talk to Kevin about things that concern me and has shown that he is with me." This relationship wouldn't have been created without Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Black Hills, the organization Patricia describes as, "an amazing organization!"

Kevin and James spend their time hiking, thrift store shopping, going to the movies or watching movies at home, playing video games, and flying kites. James will be going to Kevin's Cub Scout graduation and his Honor Choir concert at school. They do all of these fun activities together all while James works with Kevin on making better choices at home, especially with his mother. As with any relationship, they've hit some bumps in the road. James said the progress is fulfilling and says, "You just gotta keep going at it because it's extremely rewarding." The in-between moments is where the potential is ignited.

Kevin wanted to make spaghetti for James with his own "perfect recipe" during one of their times together. Kevin tried to add one cup of red pepper flakes, and James had to intervene. He did get to add some to the sauce along with cinnamon. "He was throwing in random stuff, but it was actually not that bad. I ate it," said James. James let Kevin do something for him, be creative, and learn.

"It's a true brother-brother relationship. We can talk or just go do what 10-year-old boys do. I am someone to hang out with instead of someone asking him about his problems. He talks to me about them and if he wants me to, I give him advice. If he doesn't, I just listen. That's important for him," says James. He goes on to say his mentorship allows him to "take a break from life" and says, "This is equally as good for the volunteer. I never knew how much fun I'd have."

Patricia says it's a "perfect match" and says she'd tell her son's Big Brother, "Thank you for being the best Big Brother. Thank you for making the little things the big things like giving Kevin your sumo wrestler for good luck. Thanks for making Kevin a part of your life when you didn't have to. Thanks for caring about us."

"She's doing a good job. As simple as that sounds. She's a good mom. She's doing really good with him. The struggles are going to be worth it," says James about Patricia.

Patricia will continue to have hope for her son and enjoy root beer floats with him during their family movie nights. "My wish for Kevin is to gain self-confidence and realize what an amazing kid he is. To not have him so hard on himself and to understand how loved he is in this world."

"I have no doubt he's going places. He's smart," said James.



Big Brothers Big Sisters. This isn't their whole story. It's just a chapter. This is a beautiful, evolving, real story. Stand with us and continue to read about their journey as it unfolds.