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Big Sister, Little Sister in Nashua find it's fun to be open to new adventures

Last spring, Big Sister Briana attended a one-day community service project with classmates from Rivier University.

The college students spent the day playing games with children in the Nashua Girls Inc. after-school program.

The experience convinced Briana, an elementary education major, to volunteer as a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Hampshire. Briana became fast friends with her 9-year-old Little Sister, Myasiah, hitting it off from the first meeting when they showed up wearing the same outfit.

More than 125 children are matched with Big Brothers or Big Sisters at schools and after-school programs throughout southern New Hampshire, and another 150 local children are matched with mentors who take them on outings in the community. About 130 children in Greater Nashua and Greater Salem are waiting for Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

Along with Girls Inc., Big Brothers Big Sisters partners with sites such as Boys & Girls Clubs in Nashua, Derry and Salem and Nashua's 21st Century Extended Day program.

Matched since September, Briana goes to Girls Inc. every week to play games, talk and hang out with Myasiah. For Briana, being a Big Sister has been an eye-opening opportunity that has brought her a strong friendship.

"Originally, I thought it would be special for her, but I've realized Myasiah has just as much of an impact on me," Briana said. "Being in a match has helped to open my eyes to the positive changes I'm capable of making, and I think we both have an effect on each other.

"It's showed me that it doesn't matter where you come from; with the right attitude, you can make opportunities happen."

Myasiah, who describes Briana as "nice, kind, awesome and very cool," enjoys that every week she gets to see Briana and have fun with her.

"My favorite thing about my Big is that we both like different things, so we get to try a lot of new activities and always have fun," Myasiah said.

Myasiah said there were times when she was waiting to get a Big Sister that it felt like it would never happen, but she feels the wait was worth it.

"I would tell other kids to get a Big Sister," she said. "And I'd tell them to never give up."

Briana also recommends the program to teens and adults interested in becoming mentors.

"I'd say be prepared for change in many different ways," Briana said. "Be prepared for an emotional connection and be willing to listen, be nonjudgmental, supporting and encouraging."

Being open to trying new things with Myasiah has been helpful in being a Big Sister, said Briana, who said the relationship has come to feel like a real sibling connection.

For more information about becoming a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Hampshire, contact Denise Morrison at dmorrison@bbbsnh.org or call 883-4851.

It isn't too late to have fun and help support Big Brothers Big Sisters by forming a bowling team and raising money for its Bowl for Kids Sake fundraiser, which is being held through Saturday, May 16, at Merrimack Ten Pin. To sign up or for more information, visit firstgiving.com/BBBSNashua/bowl2015.

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