

Big Brothers Big Sisters make big difference through bowling



By Brock Weir

Skip MacLean knew he had made a connection when he and his young friend, Daniel, were walking and Daniel reached up to take his hand.

Being a Big Brother was something the Pottageville resident had always had in the back of his mind. His kids had grown up, he had some spare time on his hands, and eventually something had to give.

After taking the plunge, filling out his forms, and going through a year-long approval process, he had his first meeting with Daniel. "It is unbelievable," said Mr. MacLean of his Big Brothers experience. "Like everything else, you are nervous at first if you are going to mesh together, but when we first met, I just felt a closeness and an affinity and we have just had a great time. I look forward to every Saturday and it is awesome.

"It was probably about our third visit [where he grabbed my hand]. I knew at that moment it wasn't me grabbing his hand, it was him grabbing mine and it was just great."

Both Skip and Daniel put their connection in action at Gateway Café and Lanes on Saturday afternoon for the annual Big Brothers Big Sisters of York (BBBSY) Bowl for Kids' Sake. The traditional fundraiser this year brought together groups and service clubs from across Aurora, including the Town of Aurora, three teams from MPP Frank Klees, as well as the Optimist Club and Rotary Club, among others. But this Big Brother and his Little Brother were not there just to bowl, they are also BBBSY's "bowling ambassadors" for Aurora.

With friendly challenges between politicians, it was time to get down to business.

"I like to call them the Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure organization," said Mayor Geoffrey Dawe of BBBSY. "They are so important to the community and all the work that you do."

BBBSY director Dean Smalley was also on hand to drive home the philosophy behind the organization.

"People don't really realise what it is like not to have a father figure or mother figure in our lives," said Mr. Smalley. "My brother and I knew what it was like and these people make such a big difference in lives. The odds are these kids are the ones where, unfortunately, if they don't have these people in their lives, will go down the wrong path so easily.

?With these mentors they go in the right direction and they are our teachers. My hat's off to the men and women who spend their valuable time and dedicate it to the kids.?