

Citizen of the Year Bundy honoured by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel York



Aurora's 2025 Citizen of the Year Sandy Bundy has received another honour ? this time saluting her work as a ?Big? with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel York, and for having a profound impact on her Little Sister.

Bundy was honoured with the Johnston Equipment Agency Ambassador Award at the organization's BIG Night, a gala and fundraiser benefiting the organization, which provides mentorship ? and so much more ? for youth in each region.

?Sandy has been an enthusiastic, selfless and reliable mentor for an incredible seven years,? said Big Brothers Big Sisters Peel York. ?She has helped her mentee grow into a happy, confident young woman, who is now in Grade 8 and actively involved in her school and passionately involved in her school's Black Students Association. Additionally, Sandy has been very involved in supporting BBBSPY in a variety of other ways.

?She is a member of our BIG Ambassadors to help support agency recruitment efforts. She is well connected in Aurora and helped to secure a location for our holiday party and helped to set up for the party. She has also helped to secure games and toys for our In-School Mentoring program and helped to deliver Valentine's cards made by our In-School Mentoring matches to individuals in an assisted living centre in Aurora. Most recently, Sandy and her mentee participated in a t-shirt design contest for BBBSPY and won!

?Sandy has been a stand-out mentor and is beyond deserving of this award that recognizes her support and advocacy for BBBSPY.?

Asked what this latest recognition for her behind-the-scenes work means, she said it's ?always a tough question to answer? but ?it firms up the fact that what I do matters and it is encouraging.?

But, by the same token, she says she hopes her recognition inspires others to step up as well.

Bundy first connected with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization when she worked for a television station in London, ON, in the early 1980s. At the time, she couldn't be a mentor, but when she finished working in a school 12 years ago, she found she missed ?that connection with the kids.?

?She was quite a different person,? says Bundy of when she first met her mentee compared to the Grade 8 student she is today. ?After all these years, she runs down to the office, gives me a big hug, and then off we go. It really has changed and progressed through the years, so it is a true relationship of two friends ? mentee and mentor.?

Bundy didn't have any expectations going into the program, she says, and had some questions on how the program would translate to an in-school environment, and even how she and her mentee would get along, but these questions were answered fast.

?It's a wonderful time of the week for me when I meet with her and I think she feels the same way because it's not school- and work-based; it's whatever we decide to do in that hour within the school,? says Bundy.

As an active member and past-president of the Optimist Club of Aurora, Bundy often gravitates towards organizations that benefit local youth. BBBSPY fits the bill, she says, but notes that not only is there a wait list for mentors ? particularly men ? to come forward and be matched with a mentee, there are also some misconceptions about what BBBSPY does.

?I think people think you've got to be a certain person ? and you do ? but really Big Brothers Big Sisters makes the connection between a student and an adult,? she explains. ?They look for things in common and whether they would work well together. I'm 65 and I'm a Big Sister ? I think that's the biggest surprise, that people think you've got to maybe be in your 20s, without children, and that sort of thing, but anybody can really be a Big Brother or Big Sister if they meet the qualifications and go through the training. I'm glad that in my late 50s they took me into consideration to be a mentor.

?They've got a waiting list of ?littles' and they need more people to volunteer. One of the most important things about these relationships is making a commitment that you might do it for more than a year or two years because once you make that connection, so it's got to be somebody that feels pretty stable with what their next few years might look like. They've got 17 different programs and I don't think people are aware of all the different programs that Big Brothers Big Sisters has and how it has changed over the years.?

For more information on Big Brothers Big Sisters Peel York and how to become involved, visit peelyork.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter