

# Big Brothers Big Sisters Partnerships Flourishing

Published: Friday, March 23, 2007

## The Daily Mining Gazette



**Erich Walter, left, and Chris Borden talk Wednesday at the Cyberia Cafe in Houghton. The two were paired through Big Brothers/Big Sisters.**

By GARRETT NEESE, DMG Writer

HOUGHTON — Chris Borden and Erich Walter have a lot in common. They both love the outdoors. They're both into fishing. And they're both part of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Borden, of Hancock Township, and Walter, 10, of Hancock, have been meeting regularly for two to three years. Borden began looking into becoming a mentor four years ago. He wanted someone who shared his interests — "someone who's cool like Erich and spends a lot of time outdoors, loves sports." He hit the jackpot with Walter. "I found a cool, outgoing kid who likes to do cool stuff," he said. Walter got involved with Big Brothers after a move left him with nobody to hang out with on his block. "I just like being able to hang out with Chris and do my favorite things in the world — fishing, biking, hockey ..." he said. During bad weather days, the two will come to Cyberia and play board games. The two are competitive, ribbing each other about Monopoly, fishing and even hockey. The latter is an interest of Walter's, so Borden took it up. Walter remains the faster skater. "I can overlap you three times," Walter told Borden.

There are 35 to 40 children/adult mentoring pairs, said local program director Maggie Munch. There are another 25 in after-school mentoring programs and 300 in Hi-Five programs, in which high schoolers work with students in elementary school. Big Brothers Big Sisters recently named its Volunteer of the Year: Greg Ozanich. But they're all doing great work, Munch said. Potential mentors go through background checks and interviews, Munch said. The process helps find the pair that will be the best fit.

Borden couldn't be happier with how things have worked out. "The three years have just flown by," he said. "Everytime we've gone out, we've had a really good time."