

The Daily Mining Gazette

Published: Tuesday - April 2, 2008

Mentoring Makes a Difference

By DAN SCHNEIDER, DMG Writer



*"Little Brother", Joe, is pictured here while on an outing with "Big Brother", Gary Marcotte...
Joe nominated his "Big Brother" for the BBBS Volunteer of the Year award which won the Honor for Marcotte.*

LAURIUM — Gary Marcotte of Hubbell and his Little Brother, Joe, have hung out a few times. "More than a few," Marcotte says. "Try about 3 or 4 years' worth," Joe says.

The pair were sitting in chairs in the reception area at Keweenaw Memorial Medical Center's fitness center in Laurium last Monday night before going for a spin on stationary bikes. "When did we start hanging out together? How old were you then?" Marcotte asks Joe. "Nine," Joe answers. He's 13 now, and over the last four years the pair have done a lot of different things together. Shooting trap at the Lake Linden Sportsmen's club, shooting pool, sometimes swimming at the SDC, bowling on rare occasions.

Joe is Marcotte's first and only match through Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Western Upper Peninsula. "Probably the only one who's brave enough to go with you," Joe says. The two razz each other like a pair of old men who've been friends for life. Like when Marcotte recounts teaching Joe how to swim. "I took something he really liked and I threw it in the center of the pool and said 'Now we'll have to figure out how to go get it,'" Marcotte says.

They've met with limited success on fishing trips. "I caught that bass once," Marcotte says. "Out of how many times we've gone fishing?" Joe asks. "So we like casting a lot," Marcotte says. "Yeah, we've got a lot of casting practice." "Of course you're always getting snagged up in the bushes." "At least I don't snag you."

Marcotte says he likes to get Joe to try new activities, particularly ones that involve exercise and push him to overcome fears. "He's always having me try new things, even though he never wants to try my new things, like skiing," Joe says. Marcotte claims bad knees keep him off the ski hill. Joe doesn't hold it against him. Joe nominated Marcotte for Big Brothers Big Sisters Volunteer of the Year for the Western Upper Peninsula with a letter that got Marcotte chosen for the award.

The 2008 Big Brothers Big Sisters Volunteer of the Year, Marcotte, says he gets as much or more from being in a match as Joe does. Like when a recent outing of shooting pool took Marcotte's mind off his dying father. "After a week back home — my father has cancer — and hospice and all that, it was a real good distraction," Marcotte says. Marcotte meets with Joe once a week, sometimes more often if there's time — Joe's schedule is usually pretty packed with Science Olympiad, drama, Boy Scouts and other after-school activities.

More information about becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister locally, or about signing a child up for the program, is available online at www.upbig.com. Or call the local office at (906) 487-9855.