



# Mentoring Matters: Big Brothers Big Sisters Miami Making A Big Difference For Kids & Mentors

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MIAMI (CBSMiami) – For more than 50 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters Miami has been matching at-risk kids with caring and committed mentors.

Meet Cedrick Oliver, 12, and his big brother Ronald Washington.

Running through obstacle courses, spotting alligators and taking a spin on a jet ski are not common activities for anyone, let alone a Middle School student.

Cedrick says when he hangs out with his big brother and friend Ronald, they get to do all of that.

The two were brought together by Big Brothers Big Sisters Miami.

As football fans, Cedrick and Ronald make a winning team on and off the field.

Ronald works with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and Cedrick is a seventh-grade student.

Their friendship started three years ago when they were matched by the program.

“It’s cool because I never had a younger brother, and, as the youngest of three brothers, it’s a whole new experience for me,” says Washington.

Cedrick has siblings of his own, but his mother wanted to make sure he had a male role model.

“I don’t count him as the ‘Big Brother Big Sister Program,’” says Cedrick. “I count him as an actual family member.”

Ronald says he signed up to be a Big Brother after one of his coworkers told him about the program and suggested he would make a good mentor.

“After that, the rest is history,” Ronald says.

Because of his job, the duo gets to have some pretty cool adventures.

Cedrick says holding a baby alligator is high on the list of his favorite activities.

As equally “wild” as his day job, Ronald was a contestant on the show “American Ninja Warrior” and helps Cedrick tackle the course.

“We do the obstacles,” Cedrick says. “My favorite is the spider web.”

“I get to bring him into the sport and take him to the local ‘Ninja’ gym and help him overcome obstacles,” explains Ronald. “Once you overcome obstacles in the gym, you can apply that same principle and concept to overcome real-world obstacles. “

One of those challenges for Cedrick was his behavior at school.

“All I used to do in 3rd grade was fight, get in trouble, or say stuff,” he says.

Ronald, however, encouraged him to stay on the right path and focus on being a good student.

He says, “The best thing to do about it is to walk away and tell a teacher.”

The two had the chance to celebrate at the annual Big Brothers Big Sisters holiday party, where they played games, enjoyed lunch, and met other “bigs and littles.”

“It’s turned out to be more than I ever expected from it and a lot more rewarding,” says Ronald.

“He makes me better. I make him better. I think it’s a great program for anybody who wants to make a difference in the future generations.”

If you want to learn more about Big Brothers, Big Sisters Miami, visit <http://www.bbbsmiami.org/>