



‘I wanted a child I could make a difference on’: Big Brother of the Year on becoming mentor

May 1, 2018

By Rudabeh Shahbazi



LIBERTY CITY (CBSMiami) — Adam Lickstein signed up to volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters six years ago, after graduating from University of Florida, and then working for several years in the football team’s recruiting office, where he saw firsthand the power of education and athletic opportunity in transforming young lives.

“I said I wanted to go into Liberty City because they said they needed me for it, and I wanted to have a child that I could really make a difference on, that was younger and we could grow together,” said Adam. “The whole objective was to get them into school. That was the life that I wanted to give somebody.”

The organization paired Adam with Ladarius, and it was a perfect match. They both love sports and playing video games, and they share a passion for academics. Adam has been a constant male presence in Ladarius' life, consistently passing along advice, particularly how important it is to go to college.

"Be the first person to go to college, set a good example for your younger siblings," he told Ladarius. "He has five younger siblings, so if you're that mentor, they are looking up to you, whether it's chores in the house, helping mom, getting through eighth grade, getting through 12th grade and going on to college, they are all going to follow in your footsteps."

Adam says Ladarius has already demonstrated how dependable and responsible he can be to his own family. When they go out to eat, Ladarius always makes sure to take food home for his brothers and sisters. In his young life, Ladarius has watched his family go through homelessness, abuse, and constant moves. Adam has been there through it all.

Now, Big Brothers Big Sisters are honoring Adam as "Big Brother of the Year", and he is not the only one receiving a special recognition. Ladarius won a scholarship for an essay he wrote about how impactful Adam has been in his life through all his transitions.

"Other people in his life let him down, and that's not what I want to do," said Adam. "If I commit to something, I'm going to follow through. I have a six-month-old baby now, and when he is in high school, (Ladarius) can come babysit my kid. The roles will be reversed, I've been telling him that all along. You've got to be there for someone. If you're going to commit to something, you don't quit. That's how I was raised, and I'm trying to instill the same thing in him."