

# Big Brothers Big Sisters held fundraising event

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RED BANK– Celebrating a night filled with food, wine, and raffle prizes, the non-profit organization [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monmouth and Middlesex Counties](#) held its 18th annual food and wine tasting event.

A donor and volunteer supported non-profit organization, the agency has been matching children facing adversity with volunteer positive role models for one on one mentoring since 1976. The organization currently provides “Big Brothers” and “Big Sisters” for 670 children. The agency’s mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one on one mentoring relationships that change their lives for better, forever, according to a prepared statement.

This year the organization’s fundraising goal for the May 4 event at Buona Sera restaurant was to raise money for its mentoring programs.

“All of the proceeds of the event support the [agency’s] mentoring programs for children facing adversity. The cost to match a child with a caring volunteer mentor is \$2,000 which includes the intake process, background screening, training and supervision for the first year. The funds raised at the food and wine tasting [event] go towards matching more children with a Big Brother or Big Sister of their own,” Marybeth Bull, the organization’s director of development said.

While listening to live music from the Remember Jones and duo, guests made their way around the event’s raffle table that had more than 25 different prizes ranging for jewelry, gift cards to baseball game tickets. Guests also participated in silent and chance auctions.

The prizes were provided by numerous sponsors that donated items for the event.

The agency honored its Big Sister of the Year, Samantha Scheer, for her years of dedication to her little sister Alana. The organization also honored its Big Couple of the Year, Kirk and Darryn Murdoch for their longstanding commitment to their little brother Arron.

“I feel so incredibly honored. I decided to become a big a few years ago and I did it for fun and to give back. I am so grateful and so honored and I honestly consider this honor one of my greatest accomplishments thus far,” Scheer said.

Scheer and Alana have been matched for five years, according to Alana.

“I think its amazing that [Scheer] is being honored tonight. She has been such a big part of my life and I think its amazing that they have chosen to honor her, I think it’s great,” Alana said.

Cathy Franzoni, treasurer of the organization, said that to see so many people show up at the event indicates how much people support the organization.

“The work that we have done for so many children over the years has been amazing and to see people come out and support our event is incredible. We not only help our children with our mentorship program but we help with their education and our mentors become big parts of their lives. To see so many people come to our event just really shows how important and how much people really depend on our organization,” Cathy Franzoni treasurer of the organization said.

Before Scheer and Alana gave their brief speeches to the guests, Michael Salerno, the second vice president of the organization, gave a speech where he thanked the guests, the members of the organization, and the owner and manager of the Buona Sera for allowing them to hosts their annual food and wine tasting event at their restaurant for the last three years.

He continued his speech by thanking Scheer for being an amazing mentor to Alana and also thanked Kirk Murdoch for being a great mentor to Arron for almost 10 years.

Salerno also announced that both Arron and Alana are graduating from high school this year and going to college in the fall.

Arron said that he will attend Kean University in the fall.

During her speech Scheer said that she first volunteered to become a big sister in 2011 and was officially matched with Alana in 2012.

“I still remember the day when I first meant Alana, she was standing on the front porch at her father’s house and was only 13 years old. We struck up conversation and I soon discovered that [Alana] was just a ball of joy and chatter box,” Scheer said.

She said she and Alana like to do many activities together from singing, cooking to acting and that every year on each other's birthday they share a special experience. This year Scheer said that they went to Philadelphia.

Scheer said that recently she lost her father to brain cancer and while he was in the hospital Alana's father also went into the hospital due to breathing issues. She said that even though Alana was going through her own issues she still cared and supported her through her time of need.

"I feel lucky and so grateful to have [Alana] in my life and I am proud to call her my friend," Scheer said.

Alana said that her mother was not really in her life and her single father wanted to give her a positive female figure which is why he reached out to the organization.

Alana said Sheer is not only a kind and caring person but that she has helped her apply for college. Alana finished her speech by announcing that will attend Monmouth University in the fall.

After Scheer and Alana gave their speeches, Salerno began the fundraising auction to raise money for the organization's mentorship program.

He explained that to match each child they help with positive mentor costs about \$2,000, which includes background checks, supervision, training and the initial starting process.

"By helping us make more matches tonight you are creating an opportunity for our future," Salerno said.

The organization's fundraising goal was to get 30 total new matches for its mentorship programs and that the organization needed 14 more matches to meet its goal, according to Salerno.

A few guests give a donation of \$2,000, and by the end of the fundraising auction, the organization received the 14 matches, meeting its fundraising goal.

The idea for having a food and wine tasting event was established many years ago and has since grown to become one of the organization's most successful fundraising events.

"[The organization] receives little government funding so we depend on the local community to help support our mentoring programs. Years ago a food and wine tasting event was a new idea for

a fundraiser. Our agency worked with AT&T and many local restaurants and wine distributors to showcase their food and wine for those who purchased a ticket,” Marybeth Bull, the organization’s director of development, said.

“The event was a success and over the years it has taken place in several different venues. For the past three years the food and wine event has been hosted by Buona Sera in Red Bank and we are truly grateful for all they do to make it a great time for our guests and a successful evening for our agency.”

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monmouth and Middlesex Counties visit [www.bbbsmmc.org](http://www.bbbsmmc.org) or visit the organization’s [Facebook page](#).

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