# CORPORATE BIG HIGHLIGHT: MOBILE BAR ASSOCIATION - BILL WATTS

It's hard to believe that some 11 years ago, I was introduced to my little brother, Jabbori, then in second grade, who is now graduated from high school and is entering the workforce. I didn't know the first thing about being a Big Brother to this shy, little one. All I knew to do was to show up, ask questions, be present, and let him know I cared. I remember the endless games of Connect 4, Battleship, and Monopoly (to be continued each week from notes of our respective land holdings), reading books together about the life of George Washington Carver in the school library, puzzling over multiplication challenges thrown up on the blackboard, one-on-one basketball until I could no longer keep up with him, or just sitting together and catching up.

Later, in the community-based program, we were able to be together outside of school. We rode mountain bikes through the USA campus woods, cycled on Dauphin Island, got up the guts for roller coasters at OWA (in a moment of true bonding, both of us chickened out of the Rollin' Thunder). He saw his first live theater performance at Chickasaw Civic Theater. Many dinners together. I watched him grow into adolescence, begin holding jobs, struggle with math, be morose, be joyful. Sometimes it seemed like I wasn't getting through, and I wondered if he really wanted to continue. But then a corner would be turned. I am grateful to the folks at BBBS who were always willing to intervene and come alongside me when things got challenging. But our relationship was strong enough for me to call him up to a greater degree of commitment to our relationship. And he responded.

And now, I am so proud to see him graduate, which was no easy task. And yet he never gave up. And now he has a vision for a career ahead of him in the workplace. He talks about his "seven-year plan" to save enough money to buy a house, etc. (I didn't even have a one-month plan at his age).

The other night we were sitting across from each other at dinner. In a tone that sounded like a sudden revelation, he remarked, "You know, I've known you most of my life." Longevity meant something to him. I guess he knows we are friends for life. And he tells me thanks. That brings joy to my heart. And real hope for his future. Gratitude will take him far.

I began this journey because I was no longer content just being critical of the ineffectiveness of our society's attempts to help the poor through governmental programs. I had to do something to try to make a difference, even if just to one. For that opportunity, I am grateful to BBBS. It has changed my perspective on myself, giving me a new confidence in the power of simply being present with and curiously attentive to another, particularly to a younger person. It's the power of their becoming known to another who is glad to be with them. It's a power that exists no matter how little a difference you feel you are making. For whatever difference I did make, I am grateful to God. And for whatever lies ahead in my Little Brother's life, I look forward with great anticipation to see how he discovers his destiny and makes a difference himself to the world around him.

To learn more about our elite Corporate Big Program that the Mobile Bar Association is a proud member of, please visit www.bbbssa.org.

DO YOU THINK YOUR COMPANY WOULD BE A GOOD FIT? The Corporate Big Program is a flexible School-based mentoring opportunity that measurably impacts the lives of the children we serve but also your company culture and the lives of our mentors, your employees. We pair each company with their own school in close proximity and the company allows those who want to participate and who qualify to leave work one hour a week for the duration of the school year to meet with their mentee at school, during school hours. Research shows employees-even those that don't volunteer-feel greater pride and loyalty toward an employer that supports a respected cause like Big Brothers Big Sisters and encourages employees to get involved. If you think this flexible volunteer opportunity that has a measurable impact would be a great fit for your company, visit our website to see a list of our current outstanding Corporate Big partners and call or email Aimee at 251-454-2233 or aimee@bbbssa.org for more information.