

Brothers celebrate a year of good times

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"E SHARES THE SAME interests as I have."

"It's easy to talk about things with him — and he has a sense of humor."

Two brothers are speaking — a Big Brother and a Little Brother — who are part of an organization which locally pairs men and boys and women and girls in a family-oriented relationship that fills an important gap in their lives.

Name of the organization is Big Brothers/Big Sisters, with offices at 1509 Seabright Ave., Suite 2A.

Currently, it serves some 80 youngsters between the ages of 7 and 14.

Tom Long, the Big Brother and a wholesale meat salesman, lives with his wife, Linda, in Aptos. They have no children.

The Little Brother, Jason Smith, is 13 and is a student at Capitola Junior High School. His parents are divorced and he lives with his mother and sister in Santa Cruz.

Tom and Jason recently celebrated their first year as brothers

with a lunch date at the Flying Lady in Gilroy. Both are airplane buffs — in fact, Jason hopes one day to become an airline pilot.

It's Tom's first experience as a Big Brother — Jason has had several others before him.

Tom first saw details of the organization on a television news spot.

"I then got some information from a booth at the Spring Fair," he says, "and I mulled it over for about six months.

"I had ideas on what the commitment should be and I wanted to be sure I was ready to make the time commitment before I got involved."

When he decided to join, he filled out a four-page questionnaire and went through the orientation and an in-depth interview with the director, Mary Rhoads.

Then his 'match' with Jason was effected.

Jason is experienced — has been a Little Brother since he was seven years old.

"It was sort of a reverse thing," Tom recalls.

"I was really apprehensive about meeting Jason — and he greeted me warmly and made me feel welcome



right away!"

Then the two went for a walk on the beach, to get acquainted.

They learned they had quite a lot in common — and they've had an easy, comradely relationship ever since.

The two brothers get together three or four times a month, sometimes with the other members of their families.

Soon, they plan a trip to Yosemite.

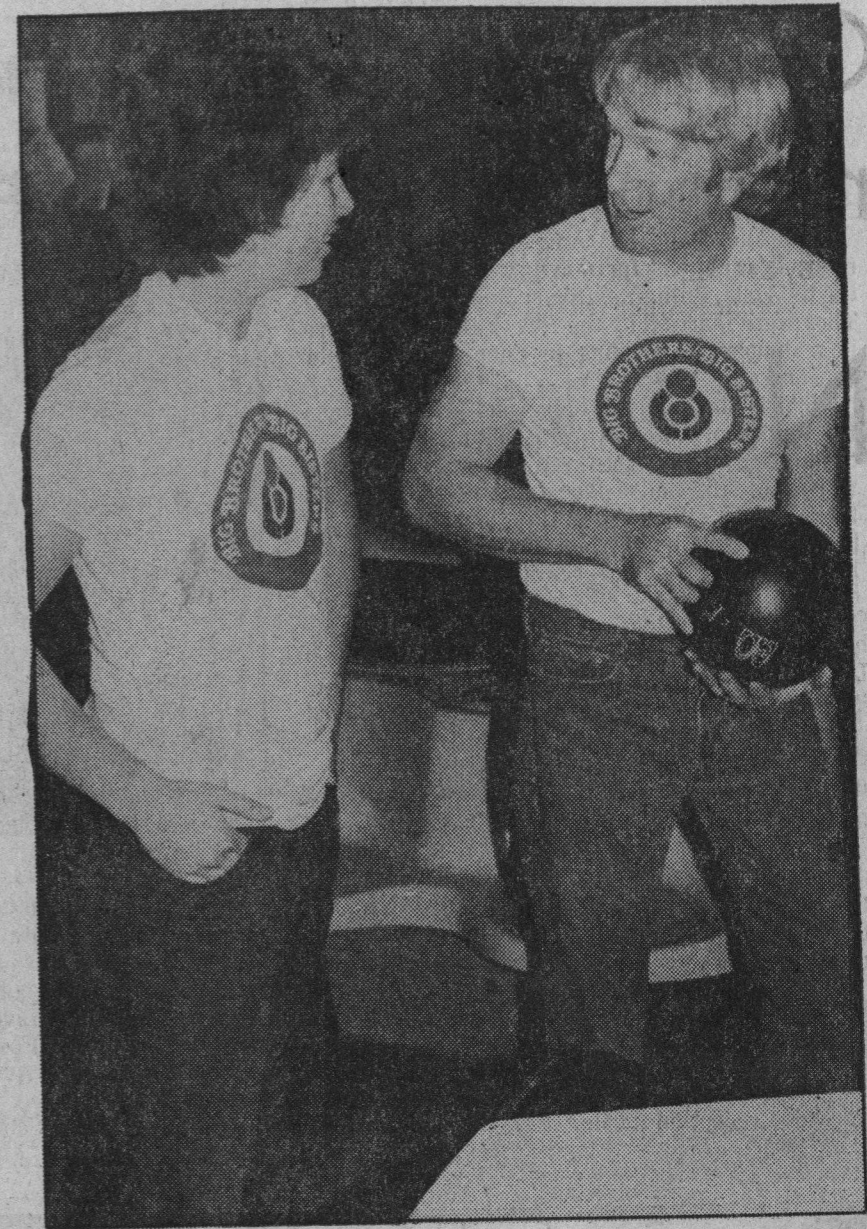
Highlight of their relationship, from Jason's view, was the day they

went to San Jose and watched the Blue Angels.

Tom says his favorite memory so far was the day during the Christmas holidays when he took Jason to work with him and introduced him to his co-workers and his customers.

Mary Rhodes says the reason there is more publicity focus on the Big Brothers than on the Big Sisters is that there is always more need for the men volunteers. Waiting list of boys who would like Big Brothers is long, she reports.

For more information, call 425-0802.



Big Brother Tom Long and Little Brother Jason Smith enjoy bowling — and often just get together to talk. They recently celebrated their first year as 'brothers.'

Big Brothers/Big Sisters sponsors bowling benefit

A benefit bowl-a-thon will be sponsored by Big Brothers/Big Sisters Feb. 12 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Surf Bowl.

Bruce Bratton and Kelly Houston will be masters of ceremonies and among participants will be Greg Franks and Joe Sharino. Prizes will be awarded.

Pledge forms are now available from 425-0802. Participants will get sponsors to pledge and will be given

specific bowling dates.

League bowlers have been asked to participate through their leagues during the week of Feb. 12-19.

"Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County serves children throughout the county from single parent families who are in trouble or at risk of getting into trouble," says Mary Rhoads, director.

"These children benefit immense-

ly from the volunteer adult guidance and friendship provided by the program and are more likely to realize their potential and to become valuable citizens of the future.

"For a child from a single parent family, growing up can be especially rough. A single parent can't always provide all of the time and under-

standing it takes to help a child through those difficult years; sometimes, the child ends up feeling lonely and unsure.

"For a child, having a special adult friend — someone who listens, someone who understands, someone who really cares — can make growing up a little easier."