



Media Contact:
Brenda Frachiseur, Executive Director
530.626.1222
Brenda@bbbsns.org

Media Alert

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Sierra Announce Big Brother and Big Sister of the Year

Placerville, CA-- Congratulations to Big Brother Jeff Ashburn and Big Sister Lalani Ratnayake who have been named the 2022 “Bigs” of the Year” by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Sierra (BBBSNS). The announcement was made at BBBSNS’ January Mentor Mixer hosted at Tr3s Calaveras Mexican Restaurant at Burke Junction in Cameron Park and in recognition of National Mentoring Month.

“All of our Bigs are honorable people who help the children in our communities who are often in crisis,” said BBBSNS Chief Executive Officer Brenda Frachiseur. “The Bigs of the Year award allows us to highlight two individuals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty making remarkable differences in the lives of their Littles.”

Big Sister of the Year Lalani Ratnayake

Big Sister Lalani has made her Little Sister Shalom’s future clearer and brighter through her persistence and caring determination for the match. We learn vast amounts of information from reading, and for Little Sister Shalom and Big Sister Lalani’s match, this couldn’t be truer. Shalom’s guardian had expressed concerns to Lalani that Shalom only wanted to read picture books rather than age-appropriate chapter books. Lalani and Shalom frequented the library in the earlier days of their match. Without fail, Shalom heavily gravitated towards picture books. Lalani, determined to support Shalom, continued to follow up with her and found that her eyes hurt after reading for a while and she chose picture books to avoid the pain. Shalom disclosed that she had blacked out from her vision ailment.

Lalani followed up with Shalom’s guardian who shared that she had never been to an optometrist because she passed every vision test with flying colors. Lalani found a coupon for Shalom to have a free visit and they found that, technically, nothing was wrong with her eyes—instead it was the muscles around them. Shalom’s guardian and Lalani have worked together to get Shalom vision therapy, taking turns driving her to appointments. Lalani is excited for Shalom to be able to show the world how smart she really is.

Big Brother of the Year Jeff Ashburn

Jeff Ashburn has served as a Big Brother since 2019. ‘True committed friendship’ are words that would describe the nature of his relationship with Little Brother Jayce who

entered BBBSNS' program needing the support and encouragement of other adults around him. Jeff's honest, witty and accepting personality has helped Jayce feel comfortable from the start of their first meeting. Jeff has continually invested in Jayce by taking him to youth group activities and introducing him to healthy peer environments. He has also insistently advocated for Jayce on numerous occasions, which has helped Jayce start to rebuild his trust in other adult relationships.

When Jayce's mom was asked how things were going between Jeff and Jayce, her response was what BBBSNS strives to support, "One of the best decisions I have made was contacting BBBSNS and Jayce meeting Jeff!" Jeff's consistent and affirming presence in Jayce's life has offered the support that Jayce has needed to find wholeness and healing.

While BBBSNS loves sharing positive stories of champion defenders of potential, the work is never done. The agency's waitlist continues to grow with children who need more volunteers like Lalani and Jeff. Currently, there are 45 kids waiting to be matched.

If you know of anyone that would be a good Big Brother or Big Sister, please encourage them to check out the BBBSNS website or have them call the agency's Enrollment Manager, Heather, for more information: 530.626.1222. It takes only a few hours a week to change a child's life for the better. BBBSNS has served the youth of El Dorado, Nevada and Placer Counties since 1977.

#Defenders of Potential