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Mentoring groups need men, but some have already joined the ranks

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Volunteer pal profiles

Bob Broad shook up his life a few years ago -- changed careers, became a dad, got in touch with his passions.

For one thing, he wanted to volunteer with young people. Broad connected with Portland Impact, a social service agency that pairs mentors with students. "Put me where you see the biggest need," he said.

Broad, a real estate agent in Southwest Portland, visits his 13-year-old friend every Thursday for lunch. The guys eat a little, talk a little. At first, Broad says, he was amazed how much the boy shared -- and nervous about giving advice. Now, conversations feel natural.

Maybe, Broad says, men just need extra practice.

"We're not good at sharing our feelings," he says. "We're socialized to bury them."

Carl Terranova planned to be a middle school teacher but wound up in information technology. Mentor Portland sounded like a great way to help teenagers.

"It was a little intimidating, but when I thought about it, any excuse I could come up with sounded pretty weak."

Terranova worked with a boy for a year and later helped recruit and train mentors -- including friends. The program became part of their social lives.

Now, Terranova is back to hands-on mentoring. He and his pal, a 14-year-old from Gresham, go to parties and camping trips with other pairs. When it's just the two of them, they do simple stuff: say, shop at Costco.

"Driving is where most of the conversation happens," Terranova says. "When boys don't have to sit across from you and answer questions, they do better. They can pretend they're not talking about big stuff."

Earl Frederick left behind a huge family when he moved from New York to Portland. "We had 300 people at my family reunion last year," he says.

So the 27-year-old, a cooking teacher for Job Corps, volunteered to be a big brother.

Big Brothers Big Sisters recently matched Frederick with Jeff Jarrell, a 16-year-old Jefferson High School student. The guys have gone to basketball games, shot hoops, visited a batting cage and played football. And Frederick promises to show off his cooking soon.

Hanging out with Jarrell is part of everyday life, says Frederick, who volunteered with the Boys & Girls Clubs in New York.

"People think they don't have enough time," he says. "That's not necessarily true."

Jarrell says he waited 11/2 years to be matched. When his foster mom suggested the program, he saw it as a way to get out of the house. "But I got much more."

-- Laura Oppenheimer

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