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Randolph man honored for his work with 'little brother'

Photos



Debee Tlumacki

Big Brother Frantz Prenelus holds his two year old son James as he talks to Michael Elysee. Michael is his sons godfather.

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By Fred Hanson

The Patriot Ledger

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RANDOLPH — It began with Frantz and Michael. Then came Bernadette, Theresa and Ellen. Followed by James and Maia. "He's family now," Frantz Prenelus said of Michael Elysee. "He's like my biological little brother, adopted."

A decade ago, Prenelus was matched with Michael through the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay. The relationship soon extended to include Michael's mother, Bernadette, and his sister Stephanie.

When Prenelus began dating his now-wife Ellen, he brought her along on a whale-watching trip with Michael so she could meet him.

"Who had his heart first, I don't know," Ellen Prenelus said. "I knew Frantz was serious about me when he took me along on a trip with Michael."

When the Prenelus' twins, James and Maia, were born almost three years ago, Michael became James' godfather. And Frantz Prenelus assured Michael and his family that the birth of the children wouldn't mean he'd be spending less time with them.

"I told him, 'You're just as much a part of this family as everyone else,'" Prenelus said.

Michael's mother, Bernadette, introduces Prenelus as "my son."

"Frantz loves kids. He cares about them. He's made a difference for Michael. He did the things with Michael that I can't do," she said. "You don't find these people. It's like God sent him to me and my children."

Earlier this month, Frantz Prenelus was honored as "Big Brother of the Year" by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay.

Prenelus, 41, had his first contact with the organization when he was doing a research project while a student at Salem State College. He spent three years as a big brother to another child named Michael.

After graduation he left the program when he started his career. He enjoyed his first experience so much that he

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came back.

"It makes a world of difference for the kid," Prenelus said. "As time goes on, you want to spend more time with the kid as you build up a relationship."

Michael was 7 years old when he and Prenelus first met. Michael, who lives in Cambridge, was a quiet kid who suffered from attention deficit disorder and dyslexia. Prenelus said Michael's father lived nearby and wanted nothing to do with his son.

Both are of Haitian heritage, and Prenelus got Michael involved in soccer, serving for many years as a coach in Cambridge Youth Soccer.

Michael, 17, still plays soccer and basketball at Community Charter School of Cambridge, where he's a junior. Michael is thinking about switching to football this fall, hoping he can play in college. Prenelus has volunteered to work out with Michael this summer to help him get ready for football tryouts.

Prenelus also keeps an eye on Michael's school work, helping him with homework and even attending his parent-teacher conferences.

Their relationship has had more than its share of fun moments. Michael recalls a particular miniature golf game.

"He was talking trash, and I beat him on a hole-in-one," Michael said.

His interest has also extended to Michael's older sister Theresa, who is a junior at Howard University in Washington.

Their mother recalled when Prenelus came over too see Stephanie off on her prom night.

"I never saw him so happy," the mother said. "It was like it was his own daughter."

The two families get together frequently, celebrating each other's birthdays or even spending a Saturday afternoon kicking a ball around or playing other games with the Prenelus twins in the backyard of their Randolph home.

An investigator for the state Department of Social Services, Prenelus sees the worst that can happen to children. Prenelus thinks he's played a role in helping Michael steer clear of these problems.

"The fact that I was a consistent male presence, I think I made a difference," Prenelus said. "He could have easily fallen through the cracks."

But, he said, most of the credit goes to the strong support system Michael has in his mother, sister and grandmother.

"I'm always a small piece of the puzzle," Prenelus said.

Michael hopes to go to college and study engineering.

Prenelus hopes Michael will consider something else as well.

"I hope you do the same thing for someone else," he told Michael. "That's the way you can thank me."

Fred Hanson may be reached at fhanson@ledger.com.

Summerfest is July 24-26 (07/21/08)

- Randolph Women's Club seeking new members, adds programs (07/21/08)
- Summer Fairy Party in Norwell (07/21/08)
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Comments (23)

Beautiful story 2 months ago Report Abuse

thank you.

thank you 2 months ago Report Abuse

what a nice story. These two men make a fine example of human kindness and the value of community service. Enjoy the recognition !!

SOOOOO NICE 2 months ago Report Abuse

IT REALLY IS SO NICE TO HEAR GOOD NEWS WITH SO MUCH CRAP GOING ON, THANK YOU FOR REPORTING SUCH A NICE STORY ;0)

great job 2 months ago Report Abuse

Ledger and Mr. Hansen - this is the type of news that I want to hear about in the community - I'm sure there's more out there too

touched 2 months ago Report Abuse

very very nice story - captured the heart - thank you ledger peoples for writing so nice

the devils advocate 2 months ago Report Abuse

Boring!

How Lucky Are We? 2 months ago Report Abuse

What a satisfying and heartwarming article. We need a thousand more Frantz Prenelus' in this world, or should I say in MA. Now that's a REAL MAN! Thank you for sharing his story - he is a role model for the male gender!

Lets Keep it going 2 months ago Report Abuse

I am inspired by this story. I am going to make my home in Randolph look better. The energy may be contagious.

Nice ! 2 months ago Report Abuse

I like stories like these. We need more of them in the news.

TO: Let's Keep 2 months ago Report Abuse

there are many ways to get involved and you don't even have to leave Randolph! We have many children of our own that would benefit from having another adult in their lives that cares about them.

Soccer coaches? Call Randolph Youth Soccer. I'm sure they could use you.
<http://www.randolphyouthsoccer.org/>

Baseball/Softball? Try Randolph Youth Baseball/ Softball League <http://rygba.com/>

The Rec. Dept is starting 'Friends of the Rec' where your talents could be of use. The group will provide community input and create a volunteer base to help develop and support our programs. We've scheduled an organizational meeting for Wednesday, May 21st @ 7:00 pm in the Lincoln Rm. at the Town Hall. Bring a friend. I would imagine 'community input' includes students.

We need to engage our young people.

Randolph has changed forever get over it! 2 months ago Report Abuse

They have tried the feel good get involved programs in boston for years,and nothing ever changes.

Oscar 2 months ago Report Abuse

the Grouch has arrived, everyone. Okay, we can all just give up and go home now. This ain't no Boston and if we do nothing? I hope you enjoy your summer.

OSCAR THE GROUCH 2 months ago Report Abuse

His neighborhood wasn't terrorized by thugs,also Randolph is just an extension of Boston.let's hit the vault.

Good job Ledger 2 months ago Report Abuse

Finally, a story that has something positive to say about our town. To fellow Randolph people, lets keep this thing going. We have an opportunity to live in harmony as our neighbors in Milton have done. We need to care for each other and take pride in our town.

yeah 2 months ago Report Abuse

what?see ya at the vault homeboy!

oscar the grouch 2 months ago Report Abuse

is fred hanson caving to pressure?

caving ? 2 months ago Report Abuse

I certainly hope so.

Bravo 2 months ago Report Abuse

Tip of the Hat. Radolph folks shold be proud to read this story. Well done

Quinzy52 2 months ago Report Abuse

This is a Great story a man being a Big Brother to a boy who needs a Father. That is what the Big Brother Association is all about. In 1966 my mother and I were in the Gilcrest store in Quincy. It is now the location of AJ Wright. A sales clerk that my Mother was friendly with said 'your son needs a Man in his life'. I was 14 then. The Man I who became my Big Brother was always there and leading me on the Right path. He was 59 when I met him and 72 when he died and I was at my Father's in Ft Lauderdale,FL. I did something in 1995 that resulted in a Felony arrest in Lebanon,ME. That case was Dismissed for Lack of Evidence. He would have been so ashamed of me if he was alive. I needed MONEY. That is the only excuse for what I did. Other than

that one thing, my BIG Brother Ken was probably the most influential person in my life.

Ched(lette sis) 2 months ago Report Abuse

I'm so proud you !!!! Keep it up !! We need more position brother like you in this world...Thank you !!! thank you!!

Fab (your cuz) 2 months ago Report Abuse

You do our family and our people proud. May God continue to bless you in your service to others. Peace

Maga 2 months ago Report Abuse

Awesome job!!! We definitely need more men like you out there to show these children how to become responsible men! May God continue to bless you and all the lives you touch!

Loved it! 2 months ago Report Abuse

What a very inspiring story - all about the difference one person can make in another person's life.

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