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Campbells and Estwaniks are the perfect foursome



By Jessie Moniz

Anthasia Campbell and her brother Giovanni are two kids who love, love, love to run.

And now through the Big Brothers & Big Sisters programme they are sharing that passion with top Bermuda runners Chris and Ashley Estwanik.

The Estwaniks are part of a growing number of 'sporty types' who are giving back to the community by becoming mentors with Big

Brothers & Big Sisters.

In the programme mentees are known as 'Littles' and mentors are known as 'Bigs' – seven-year-old Anthasia is Ashley's 'Little' and ten-year-old Giovanni is Chris' 'Little'. For convenience's sake it was easier to pair the siblings together.

Anthasia wrote of her 'Big': "Ashley is my big sister. We have fun together. We go many places. We have been to the aquarium, Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Fair and to the movies to see 'Madagascar Escape to Africa'. Every Saturday they pick my brother and I up from Ice Queen.

"We have lunch and then go home. She calls me and I call her. I call her when I need help with my homework because she is a school teacher. Our next outing is the Big Brothers & Big Sisters' Christmas party. I look forward to it."

Mrs. Estwanik said they were inspired to join the organisation by Mr. Estwanik's father, Bill.

"He was a Big Brother for a long time, and we thought it would be a great thing to do," said Mrs. Estwanik. "And they really need mentors. Giovanni and Anthasia were waiting for more than a year for mentors."

Big Brothers & Big Sisters tries to match Bigs and Littles with similar interests.

"We started with our Littles in October," said Mrs. Estwanik. "They definitely get excited about the running. They want to tell us how they did in running at school, when they have track meets in the spring and things like that. We will probably go and watch them."

Although the Campbell siblings and the Estwaniks share an interest in running, they do a lot of other things as well.

"They helped us plant a vegetable garden," said Mrs. Estwanik. "So far, there is one lettuce plant that is ready to be picked.

"This past weekend we played tennis with them. It was fun and we could have gone on for another

hour."

One of the Estwanik's goals with their mentees is to promote a healthy lifestyle.

"When we eat with them, we try to make a healthy lunch," said Mrs. Estwanik. "We made a healthy version of cookies with them.

"If you are eating unhealthy foods when you are little then you will do it when you are an adult and it will be a downward spiral."

As a teacher, Mrs. Estwanik encourages her students to be active and eat right.

"When they are little they are still active, and there is physical education every day," she said. "What happens when they are older, is that some kids start to show a lot of promise, so people focus on them. The other ones are saying 'well, I'm not an athlete so I shouldn't exercise'. It is important to exercise, if not every day, every other day, to be healthy. We should promote not just sports and competitiveness, but also exercise and a healthy lifestyle."

The Estwaniks married two years ago and moved to Bermuda a year ago. Bermudian Mrs. Estwanik, formerly a Couper, is a teacher at the Bermuda High School for Girls. Mr. Estwanik is American and works in the reinsurance industry.

They have made a name for themselves in the Bermuda athletic community among other achievements, last spring they made history when they lifted both the men's and women's titles in the Bermuda Day Half Marathon Derby.

In addition to her work, and running, Mrs. Estwanik also coaches and has other volunteer activities.

"Sometimes it is a challenge to figure out how to fit things in, but we really feel good about it once we figure it out," said Mrs. Estwanik.

The Big Brothers & Big Sisters programme is meant to be a three hour commitment per week. On weeks that the Estwaniks are travelling they try to make up their mentor commitment by doubling up the time, or doing a long day together with their mentees.

"A lot of people who want to get involved say, 'Is it a time constraint on you?'" said Mr. Estwanik. "I would say that yes, you do have to give up some of your weekend time, but it is worth seeing their faces light up when they see you."

Mr. Estwanik said his father had been a big inspiration for him.

"He was a long-time Big and now sits on the board of directors in the Big Brothers & Big Sisters Association in our hometown in the United States," said Mr. Estwanik.

"He actually started when I was a year-and-a-half-old.

"My father is such a fantastic guy. He always had time for everyone no matter how busy he was. That has partly carried over into my life."

Mr. Estwanik said that as an athlete, he'd also been mentored by many people along the way.

"Being a Big Brother or Big Sister is a small way to pay back all the people who mentored us," said Mr. Estwanik. "It is amazing how much you can continue to learn from mentors all through life.

"I am sure there are people in the twilight years of their careers who are still learning something."

One of his prime mentors was Frank Gagliano, who was coach of the Nike Farm Team, an elite

running group that the Estwaniks were members of in the United States, before relocating to Bermuda.

"We had people from all over who hopped in a car and moved across the country," said Mr. Estwanik. "He took care of us. The mentor opportunities he gave us and the life lessons he was able to relate to us were wonderful."

Mr. Estwanik said he gets back a lot from being a mentor in Big Brothers & Big Sisters.

"When you have someone who is young and eager to learn with you it is a great thing," he said.

He said being a mentor has He said being a mentor has also brought new perspective to his own life.

"There were so many people who have made so many sacrifices for me that I never realised until I started trying to help someone else," said Mr. Estwanik. "I am speaking as an athlete. I believe that it is my responsibility to pay it forward."

Mr. Estwanik said being a mentor had also helped him to connect with his new community.

"It helps me to have a better understanding of how things work in Bermuda," said Mr. Estwanik.

"As a married couple, we feel like we have our feet on the ground now.

"You see where the other's interests lie in the community. It is a balance of friends, family, community obligations, sports or whatever it might be.

"The fun part is being a married couple in a small place like this, because there are a lot of things to do."

For more information about Big Brothers & Big Sisters telephone 232-2802 or e-mail patrina.bbbs@logic.bm">patrina.bbbs@logic.bm.
