

## **Youth mentors race for “reconnection”**

**Former Big Brother and his “Little” put the pedal to the metal to help Big Brothers, Big Sisters reach out to lost volunteers**

**August 18, 2009, Burlington** – Former Big Brother, Tom Thornton, and his “Little”, Ron Bartleet, are setting out on the adventure of a lifetime by competing at Targa, a gruelling, 2,200 kilometre road rally that winds through eastern and central Newfoundland from September 13 to 18. And along the way to Targa, the two will be shining a spotlight on the power of mentoring to help children in need and inviting past and current “Bigs” and “Littles” to join them on their epic journey by registering on [www.thebigrace.ca](http://www.thebigrace.ca).

Past and current Bigs and Littles who register on [www.thebigrace.ca](http://www.thebigrace.ca) to follow Thornton’s and Bartleet’s progress will have the chance to win an expense-paid trip to St. John’s, Newfoundland, including free airfare from WestJet, to witness the two cross the finish line at Targa.

Called The Big Race, the youth mentors’ journey to reconnect with Bigs and Littles is part of a broad initiative by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) to strengthen ties with its former volunteers and raise awareness of the rising demand for youth mentoring services right across Canada.

Big Brothers Big Sisters’ Alumni program enables former Bigs and Littles to continue to experience the benefits of their involvement with mentoring and provides a way for Bigs and Littles who have lost touch to reconnect. Alumni’s goal is to reconnect with 100,000 former volunteers by 2013.

On their journey and at Targa, Thornton and Bartleet are driving a SIRIUS Satellite Radio-equipped, decaled MINI Cooper S Clubman, provided courtesy of MINI Canada, from Niagara Falls, Ontario, to Newfoundland and the two will make pit stops for media interviews in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, Moncton and Halifax. MINI is also providing financial support to make the Big Race possible.

“We are issuing a warm invitation to all our volunteers and their Littles – past and present – to follow Ron and Tom on their journey for reconnection by registering as an Alumni member,” says Monika Paquette, BBBSC’s Alumni Director. “Ron and Tom will be uploading their blog daily with video, audio and written journals. If you have a past connection with Big Brothers Big Sisters, or are just interested in learning more about mentoring, The Big Race is a ‘don’t miss’ opportunity to celebrate the power and beauty of the relationships between our volunteers and the children they mentor.”

Thornton volunteered to be Bartleet’s big brother 40 years ago. Bartleet, now a successful financial advisor, credits the mentoring he received as being the cornerstone of his success in life.

“Tom took me under his wing when I was six years old and showed me a clear path to happiness and success through consideration for others and hard work,” says Bartleet. “We are particularly excited about helping thousands of lost Bigs and Littles reconnect with each other through our website.”

For Thornton, being a Big Brother has been a source of tremendous satisfaction and fun over the years.

“There is no thrill greater than seeing a child’s eyes sparkle with happiness and excitement, and there has been no experience in my life as rewarding as being Ron’s Big Brother and friend.” says Thornton. “Our journey to Targa is the latest chapter in an adventure that began 40 years ago. We challenge every former and current Big and Little in Canada to register on our website to experience our Targa adventure. Together, we can make sure that every child who needs a mentor has one.”

### **About Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni**

Launched in 2006, Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni is dedicated to reconnecting with past Big Brothers and Big Sisters and creating a powerful base of support to better serve the mentoring needs of Canadian children and youth. BBBS Alumni currently has just over 13,000 members with a target of reconnecting with 100,000 former volunteers by the organization’s centennial anniversary in 2013.

### **About Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada**

Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada is the nation’s largest youth mentoring organization, providing quality adult mentoring services for over 26,300 children, with a goal of 100,000. Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada currently has 140 agencies serving 1,000 communities, and yet more must be done, as some children still have to wait up to two years for a Big Brother or Big Sister. Learn more about Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada by visiting <http://www.bbbsc.ca>

### **About MINI Canada**

MINI Canada is a division of BMW Group Canada, based in Whitby, Ontario, a wholly-owned subsidiary of BMW AG responsible for the distribution of BMW luxury performance automobiles, Sports Activity Vehicles, Motorcycles, and MINI. BMW Group Financial Services Canada is a division of BMW Group Canada and offers retail financing and leasing programs and protection products on new and pre-owned BMW and MINI automobiles, as well as retail financing for new and pre-owned BMW Motorcycles. A total network of 40 BMW automobile retail centres, 19 BMW motorcycle retailers, and 25 MINI retailers represents the BMW Group across the country.

Learn more about MINI Canada and the Targa MINI racing team’s historic participation in Targa Newfoundland by visiting [www.MINI.ca](http://www.MINI.ca).

### **About SIRIUS Canada**

Available in a wide variety of vehicles including MINI, SIRIUS is Canada’s number one choice for satellite radio with 120 full-time channels broadcast from studios in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and New York. SIRIUS offers 100% commercial-free music plus premium sports, news, talk and entertainment programming from North America’s most recognizable and respected personalities and brands. SIRIUS offers listeners unparalleled coast-to-coast signal coverage and digital quality sound broadcast from three high-orbit satellites.

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