Payton and Brad

Payton and Brad might not seem like your typical best friends. Payton is 14 and Brad is in his 30s. Brad has a busy career; Payton is busy with school. If not for United Way, the two may never have met.

With his father out of the picture, Payton's mom wanted him to have a male role model and someone to talk to. Brad wanted to make a difference beyond his financial gift. When the two met, they both found something greater than either of them had imagined.

The bond Payton and Brad have built over the last four years is obvious. Payton trusts and confides in Brad, and Brad encourages him to be the best he can be at all times. Brad stresses to Payton the importance of education and Payton has responded with better grades and a new commitment to academic success. With Brad as an example, Payton's behavior has improved, and he's become more responsible and mature.

Together, Payton and Brad deal with some tough stuff, but they also make time to have fun. Brad took Payton on his first fishing trip, and the two watch sports, play football and cook dinner together. Payton and Brad’s families have become close, and when Brad and his wife had children of their own, Payton took on the role of older brother to Brad’s sons.

“Payton is a friend for life,” Brad says. And Payton agrees. “Over time, we've become like family. I'm really glad that I get to have a brother. It's just a bond I can't explain.”