

Community

Tremont native becomes ‘father figure,’ teaches patience and compassion to FDNY 9/11 child

Bx By Jason Cohen

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Brad Walz with his mentor Brian Harrison on a Tuesday's Children fishing trip in 2018.

Photo courtesy Tuesday's Children



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Brian Harrison never had kids, but after being matched as a mentor/mentee several years ago with Brad Walz he's become a "father figure."

The duo met in 2007 through the mentoring program at [Tuesday's Children](#), the nonprofit organization serving families and communities impacted by terrorism, military conflict and mass violence.

Raised in the Tremont section of the Bronx, Harrison, 64, worked as a foreman and "jack of all trades" at Coca Cola for many years. Today, he is a dispatcher for an appliance repair company.

Harrison enjoyed performing community service, and someone recommended Tuesday's Children to him. So, he looked it up and was intrigued when he discovered supported families who lost people on 9/11.

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“They hooked me up with Bradley and it’s been pretty cool since,” Harrison told the Bronx Times.

Despite differences in rooting interests — Harrison is a Giants and Yankees fan, Walz likes the Mets and Jets — the two hit it off. In the beginning, they met once a month and would chat on the phone during the week.

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Harrison kept an open mind and soon the mentor/mentee relationship grew. He went to Walz’s baseball games, his bar mitzvah, they watched sports together often, played football, went fishing, went out for sushi and Harrison even attended the Shiva a few years ago after Walz’s grandfather passed away.





Brian Harrison with Brad Walz at his high school graduation.

Photo courtesy Tuesday's Children

“I always thought he was a great kid,” Harrison said. “Two of the greatest things that ever happened to me was meeting my wife and meeting Brad through Tuesday’s Children.”

Over the years the duo grew close and became a big part of each other’s lives. According to Harrison, Walz taught him patience, tolerance, love and compassion. After witnessing Walz graduate high school, earn a master’s in communications and media at Rutgers University and embark on a career in public relations, he is proud to have known him.



“This has been a two-way street from the get-go,” he said. “Now I’ve seen the man has become today and it’s totally awesome.”

Originally from Westchester, Walz is a child of 9/11, losing his father Jeffrey who was a member of the FDNY, when he was just a toddler.

Walz, 23, said Harrison has been a devoted and constant presence in his life since 2007, providing fatherly advice and just being an active and present male role model throughout his childhood. While his mom never remarried and his uncles admitted they were busy raising their own families, Harrison was always “unconditionally there” for him.

“He’s pretty much been with me every step of the way,” Walz said about Harrison. “I think he taught me patience and compassion. I never had a father figure.”

Walz met Harrison when he was 8 years old and they soon became inseparable. According to Walz, the duo connected even more because Harrison was also raised by a single mom.

“There was never a time I felt uncomfortable,” he said about spending time with Harrison.

Due to COVID-19, they hadn’t seen each other in a couple years, but even with Walz’s busy work schedule, they always made time to chat on the phone.

Walz recommends Tuesday’s Children and its mentoring program to other young adults and children. If it wasn’t for the nonprofit and meeting Harrison, he is not sure where he would be today. He hopes to become more involved with Tuesday’s Children and one day return the favor and mentor a youth.

“I think mentorship is extremely important,” Walz said. “Tuesday’s Children gave me an outlet to connect with people. All things considered, I’ve had a very good support life.”

Reach Jason Cohen at jcohen@schnepsmedia.com or (718) 260-4598. For more coverage, follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @bronztimes

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Jason Cohen



Jason Cohen is a reporter for the Bronx Times. Originally from New Jersey, he moved to the Bronx five years ago. Jason has been a reporter for about 14 years and loves what he does. In particular, he enjoys covering meetings, events, writing features and informing the public about news. He also has a passion for sports and anything with controversy, and his other interests include watching movies and going to the beach. When he isn't reporting or writing, Jason spends his weekends working at a bagel shop. And, yes, he's also a Mets fan. So, "Sorry Bronxites."



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