

## **Business owner finds time for brotherly love: AFTER HOURS**

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John Costello figures that after his father died when he was 6, his life could have gone badly. "I was just about ready to turn into a punk or a hoodlum. Then this guy came into my life."

That guy was a volunteer from Big Brothers, Big Sisters, which matches adults with children lacking a parent.

"I needed a role model at the time, and he kept me from getting on the streets," he said.

Costello, now 51, and owner of CK Power of Creve Coeur, has reunited with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri as a volunteer.

For the last two years, he's been paired with Cory - the agency prefers not to disclose the last names of their "littles" - who is a junior at the Construction Careers Center.

The center, a St. Louis charter high school sponsored by the Associated General Contractors of St. Louis, is composed largely of poor minority students looking to get a start in the construction industry.

"We have to give back to the youth community that is deprived," said Costello. "They do not have role models. It's scary out there."

Costello visits with Cory at least once a month. His goals are fairly simple.

"What I found out about Cory is he had no social skills. He didn't shake your hand hard, and he didn't look you in the eye. It took me months to get that done," Costello said.

"So all we do, we sit and we build a relationship, a friendship, a trust. With that, you bring them into your workplace and show them what a normal life is like."

It seems to be working, Costello said. "Now he shakes my hand firmly. He looks me in the eye and he smiles."

Costello said running his business usually consumes 12 to 14 hours a day. In addition, he has three sons, ranging from a seventh-grader to a college sophomore.

Despite the hectic schedule, Costello said he has no trouble finding time for Cory.

"I'm blessed," he said. "The long and short of it is, it's not too hard to find two or three hours every week or once a month to visit. You've got to give back. You can't be selfish."