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JBBBS NAMES 2008 BIG SISTER OF THE YEAR

LOS ANGELES -- Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters (JBBBS) recently named its 2008 Big Sister of the Year Teresa Kounin Terry. She was recognized for her dedication and leadership since her match began with her little sister, Elika, in October 2005 in the JBBBS program.

Through their time together, Terry has become a true friend and role model for Elika, helping this once reticent teenager on a path of great personal growth and accomplishments. Terry and her husband, Ron, have established themselves in the past 10 years as successful independent writers and producers. They have an expertise in the music biopic genre, having produced or written pieces ranging from Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Marvin Gaye, Bill Graham (the music promoter) to Richard Wagner.



(l-r) Elika with her Jewish Big Sister Teresa

Prior to working in the entertainment industry, Terry taught as a college professor on campuses throughout the Los Angeles area, including USC, Santa Monica College, and Cal Poly Pomona among others. She specialized in linguistics, English Second Language (ESL), English Literature, composition and grammar.

Teaching provided Terry with a direct connection to positive impacts in the lives of young adults, many of whom came from disadvantaged homes. After Terry's writing career took off and she was unable to continue teaching, her need and love for working with children in need led her to reach out and volunteer as a Big Sister.

Elika arrived to the U.S. from Israel when she was nine years old and lives solely with her grandfather, as her mother passed away a number of years ago and her father is receiving full-time medical care in Israel. To Elika, Terry provides a loving support system she did not have for such a long time -- a much needed and stable presence in Elika's young life.

"If G[-]d could put an angel on this earth without wings, it would be my big sister, Teresa," Elika said.

With Terry's encouragement and support, Elika has received JBBBS and Beat the Odds scholarships. In addition, Elika has just returned from a March of the Living trip to Poland and Israel. Thanks to Terry, Elika has big dreams for her future.

"Being a Big Sister (or Big Brother) is a blessing and a privilege. Positively touching a young person's life makes for such a meaningful and worthwhile life," Terry said. She is the second Big Sister to receive this acknowledgment, following 2007's recipient Hilary Ratner.

Founded in 1915, JBBBS specializes in mentoring children through its core matching program and school-based mentoring program.