

After Dru'nyah tragically lost her dad at age 5 our world was turned upside down. I was struggling to not only mend their hearts but my own heart as well. We turned to grief counselors to help us along our journey in our healing. Dru'nyah being so young and struggling with not knowing how to open up with her pain and loss was having the most difficult time. She lost the sparkle in her eye, the smile that once would light up a room. She was scared to leave my side thinking she had to protect me from harm. Feeling like she failed her Dad by not being able to protect him from harm. Dru'nyah was struggling with school as school reminded her of her Dad. Her Dad would take her to school every day, do her homework with her at night and always read her a bed- time story before bed. Dru'nyah struggled academically failing Kindergarten crying throughout the day and missing her Dad. One day while in therapy her therapist asked me if I ever heard of the Big Brother Big Sister program. Little did I know signing her up for the program would be one of the best decisions I would have ever made and would forever change our lives for the better.

Dru'nyah has a heart of gold and now because of Lastree I once again get to experience that smile that can turn a bad day instantly into a great day. Dru'nyah is always willing to help others and always willing to offer a listening ear. She always has the best advice to give. Dru'nyah is a great help with her younger brother and her nephew. She is definitely wiser beyond her years. As her Dad would always claim "She's been in the world before, a old spirit" The little Mom of the family even when it comes to me she thinks at times she's my Mom telling me it's late and that I need to go to bed before I'm going to be tired for work the next day. Surprising me with breakfast in bed or preparing lunch for me with cute little messages inside my lunchbox.

I couldn't begin to tell you the huge impact that Lastree has made not only to Dru'nyah but to all of us. We have truly gained another family member. She was able to give my little girl hope again, bring her smile back, and make her look forward to the future. They truly are as I call them "two peas in a pod". I still can't believe it's been seven years already. I still remember Dru'nyah counting down the days until she sees Lastree then coming home with the koolaid smile telling me all the fun she had. Sitting talking to me for hours about all the things she wanted to do with Lastree talking a million words a minute. I finally had to tell Dru'nyah you can't bother Lastree all the time. Her reply was it's ok Mom, I'm not bothering her, she loves me. I knew then Lastree had won my baby's heart. Time has really flown by. My once little girl wearing pigtails is now a teenager getting ready to head off to high school in a few months. The once academically challenged Kindergartener is now in all honors classes who hasn't missed being in an honor roll ceremony throughout her seven year relationship. Dru'nyah now has a big sister that she knows she can go to for anything and everything and will forever be by her side. When they say it takes a village to raise a child all I ever needed was Lastree. Lastree has not only been by Dru'nyah's side but also my own. Struggling raising three kids on my own I know I can always reach out for Lastree's support. Knowing that Dru'nyah has someone that will always listen and be that positive role model especially in today's world I couldn't ask for anything more and will be forever grateful of not only Lastree but also the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program.

I feel like Dru'nyah has learned that you don't always have to spend money in order to have fun. Dru'nyah enjoys spending time and making crafts with Lastree. She's learned independence and to love and appreciate her family. Dru'nyah has also learned to be more open with her feelings, how to express how she is feeling and to trust others. To be more open minded and try new things. She has also learned to see the positive side of things and to think before she reacts. Dru'nyah has learned patience and understanding. Dru'nyah looks forward to decorating for the holidays with Lastree and spending time not only with Lastree but also her family. Dru'nyah has learned how important education is and

setting not only short term goals but long term goals as well. As a parent I'm grateful that she has a forever big sister that loves her as much as I do.

Dru'nyah wants to become a neonatal nurse. She is currently attending Middle School where she is taking dual enrollment honor classes to not only receive Middle School credit but also credit toward High School. In June she will have completed three years of the International Baccalaureate Program. Dru'nyah has also applied to Suncoast High School to enter in their International Baccalaureate Program which is one of America's best high schools in all the national rankings. She has also applied for the nursing program at Palm Beach Lakes High School. She is a dedicated and hardworking student with a bright future. I'm very proud of her and could have not done it without Lastree. A huge thank you to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program who could not have made a better match for Dru'nyah.