

Lawyers for Children America SUCCESS STORIES **(Pseudonyms used to protect privacy)**



ANDREW

Andrew, a 14 year-old boy, who had been removed from his mother's home because his mother was unable to care for him due to her heroin addiction. Andrew was placed with his grandmother, but this was a temporary placement because his grandmother was fatally ill. When the LFCA attorney began representing Andrew, she immediately searched for alternative placements. Commonly, it is extremely difficult to find a foster family willing to take in a teenaged boy, and the LFCA attorney found that to be true in this case. In the alternative, the LFCA attorney managed to find a wonderful group home in New Haven with room for Andrew. The New Haven group home houses teenaged boys and has unusually caring and attentive staff. As the case progressed, the LFCA attorney built a high level of trust between she and Andrew, such that Andrew revealed to her his homosexuality and issues he had faced resulting from that. The LFCA attorney secured, in addition to the counseling Andrew was already receiving, sexual identity counseling for Andrew. The LFCA attorney continued to represent Andrew for many years. When Andrew was approaching 18 years of age, the LFCA attorney assisted Andrew in completing his application to the JOBCORP program. Andrew was accepted and successfully completed the program. Today, Andrew is 24 years old and has founded and directs his own nonprofit organization which helps LGBTQ youth. Andrew also still emails and talks with his LFCA attorney.

ROSA

Rosa, a 13 year-old girl, moved to Connecticut with her mother. After the police were called to Rosa's home in response to a domestic violence report involving Rosa's mother and her boyfriend, it was discovered that Rosa had lived in Connecticut for two years and had never attended school. Due to ongoing domestic violence issues in the home and the mother's mental health issues, Rosa was placed in foster care. At this time, an LFCA attorney was assigned to the case. The LFCA attorney visited Rosa at her foster home and scheduled an appointment at the school Rosa was to begin attending. The LFCA attorney, school officials and Rosa developed an educational plan for Rosa to attend the school and to receive special services to assist her with catching up on school lessons she had missed. The LFCA attorney also advocated for mental health counseling to help Rosa process the domestic violence against her mother that she had witnessed and worked with Rosa to establish academic goals for Rosa's future.

When Rosa's mother eventually ended the relationship with the abusive boyfriend, Rosa was able to return to her mother's home, where she desperately wanted to be. Today, Rosa attends school regularly and is an honor student. She plans to attend college. She also works with children at an afterschool therapeutic horseback riding program. In recent years, she has won trophies for her riding skills. She has a strong support system in place at school and at home and has blossomed into a happy, outgoing teenager.



SUSAN

A family of five children entered the abuse and neglect system when one child, Susan, appeared at school with bruises, allegedly resulting from her mother striking her with a broomstick. Susan had led a solitary life — she was the only person with a hearing disability who lived with a hearing family. No family member learned sign language or other alternative forms of communication to accommodate Susan's

needs. Since the family members never effectively connected with her, Susan has suffered from lack of communication and appropriate bonding with her caretakers. In addition, she disclosed to the LFCA attorney assigned to her case that she has experienced physical and sexual abuse by close family members. As a result of this trauma, Susan began behaving in a violent manner and physically attacking her siblings. Due to the persistence of the LFCA attorney, Susan was placed with a foster mother who teaches at a school for hearing impaired children, and Susan has begun counseling sessions with a therapist who knows sign language and specializes in attachment disorders and violent behavior. For the first time in her life, Susan is learning how to communicate with others and, consequently, is developing close relationships with adults who care for her.

KEITH, CARL, AND THOMAS

In addition to securing necessary services and ensuring a child client's safety and well-being, LFCA attorneys serve their clients by relying on more traditional lawyering skills. In this case, an LFCA attorney represented three young boys who entered the abuse and neglect system following the murder of their mother. Allegations have been made that the father was responsible for the mother's death. The boys established an open relationship with the attorney, to whom they expressed their fear of their father and their reluctance to testify against him. The boys became ostensibly agitated, stressed and unbalanced at the mere mention of having to face their father. Based on this information, the attorney filed an extensive motion requesting a protective order and presented oral argument to the court. The protective order was granted, safeguarding the three boys from having to confront their father. In lieu of their testimony, the attorney retained an expert witness to testify about the devastating emotional impact of their father's violent behavior on the children. In this case, the LFCA attorney advocated not only to provide these boys with the mental health counseling they needed but also to prevent situations which would cause further psychological trauma to the boys.

PAUL

Paul is a 10 year old boy whose mother has been hospitalized for mental health issues 13 times in the past two years. When Paul's father committed suicide approximately five years earlier, Paul found his father's body. When his mother was hospitalized, again, and the temporary caretaker she had secured was unable to care for Paul any longer, DCF intervened. On arriving in DCF care, Paul was evaluated for depression and was placed in a safe home. He resided in the safe home, receiving mental health treatment, for five months. During this time, Paul's Lawyers for Children America (LFCA) attorney interviewed all the family members in an attempt to find a relative with whom Paul could be placed. Through these interviews, the attorney was able to identify a somewhat distant relative through marriage who had served as a foster parent in the past. This family member was willing to become relicensed in order to take Paul in. Paul is thrilled that he will be living with "cousins," and his transition into the foster home is going smoothly. Also during this process, Paul's LFCA attorney was able to locate his paternal grandparents and aunt who had become estranged due to the mother's mental illness and their geographic distance from Connecticut. Much to Paul's delight, the LFCA attorney helped facilitate a visit with the paternal family, and now, there is the possibility that they can become a visiting resource for Paul. In addition, Paul's attorney advocated for and obtained a court order for more extensive therapy to be provided for Paul. At every meeting Paul's attorney attends, he hears the same thing from the social workers, therapists, and others in attendance, "we've never had a child's attorney attend." Paul's attorney is finding representing Paul the most fulfilling legal work he has done in his career and hopes to continue to make a difference in Paul's life.



ALBERT

Albert was five years old when the child welfare worker found him in his father's care. The family was homeless. Living arrangements with extended family continued to fail because of the father's erratic behavior. No family members came forward to care for the child, and Albert was placed in foster care. Serious behavior problems compromised Albert's adjustment to foster care and to kindergarten. Albert's foster and school placements were precipitously changed. Because Albert's attorney maintained regular contact with him, she could document the intensity of the ongoing trauma that Albert was experiencing and the inadequacy of the psychotherapeutic care he was receiving. She argued that achieving permanence and minimizing trauma required exploration of alternative permanent placements for Albert and the development of intensive clinical and educational treatments. Together with the social worker, Albert's lawyer secured a placement in a private therapeutic day school. This placement gave Albert the intensive behavioral and educational intervention that he needed, and also guaranteed that his education would not be traumatically disrupted again when a permanent living situation was found.

Pressed to explore alternatives, the child welfare agency more completely examined its files on Albert's extended family and found his maternal grandmother, who was eager to have him. Albert had positive memories of her home. The change in his behavior that coincided with this family placement and with his enrollment in the private therapeutic school was dramatic. Albert's attorney continued to actively advocate for Albert through hearings to terminate his father's parental rights and to enable his grandmother to adopt him.