



MY NAME IS LUCAS, AND THIS IS

MY STORY...

When I was a little boy I was always scared because my mom was on a lot of drugs and my parents would get in physical fights all the time. It wasn't safe for me to stay with them, so I had to be removed from their home. But I thought there wasn't any family who were willing to take me in.

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THE START OF MY JOURNEY

When I was five years old I had to leave my parent's house and go live with another family member. But after a short while, they said they couldn't keep me so a CPS worker came and took me away. They put me in a home with people I didn't know. Over the next 10 years I ended up getting moved to 11 different placements in multiple cities, always with people I didn't know.



JESSIE KINNEY
CASA VOLUNTEER

MEETING MY CASA

Now I am 15 years old and it feels like I have been in foster care my whole life, without anyone who really cares about me. But earlier this year I got my very own CASA Volunteer, Jessie. Jessie told me that a CASA is a volunteer who is appointed by a judge to be my Guardian ad Litem. She was going to be a voice for my best interest, and she would be with me until my case was resolved and I had a permanent place to live. It gave me hope knowing I finally had someone who would look out for me. Jessie said she just became a CASA Volunteer this year, and she was ready to advocate just for ME!

FEELING ALL ALONE

Even though it's only been a few months, it didn't take me long to learn that I could trust Jessie, so I felt safe about opening up to her. I shared some things with her that I had also told my therapist, that I have trouble trusting people, and I feel all alone. I told her that sometimes I act out, but it's because I feel like I have no one who cares about me. I really just want to feel safe and be around people who love me.

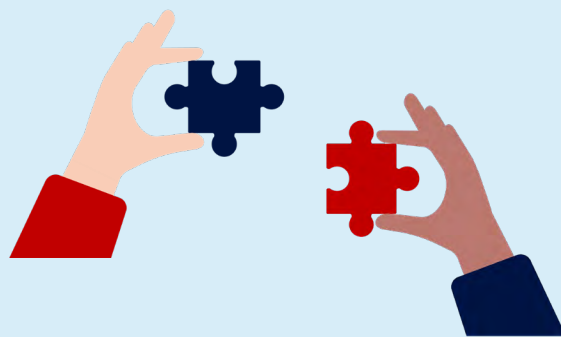




OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Right now, I live in a Residential Treatment Center out of town with a lot of other kids. When Jessie talked to the staff here, she found out that they did not receive any information about my personal history, nothing about my medical history, my educational needs, my behavioral history, or even my family. But Jessie knew that it was very important to have that for me. So, she immediately set to work researching and gathering all the information I needed.

Jessie also found out that, even though I'd been in foster care for many years, there was no adoption plan set up for me. That meant that I really had no hope of finding a safe and permanent home to live in so I could get out of foster care forever. Jessie knew that needed to change, so she advocated for me to have an official adoption profile created. She also made sure that active recruitment efforts were started to help find me an adoptive home.



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

I told Jessie I didn't have any family that I could remember, so I didn't think there was anyone who could adopt me. Jessie told me that, as a CASA Volunteer she had access to resources that could possibly help her find people in my family that I didn't know about. So, she started working with CASA's Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) team and using their CFE tools as soon as she could. She also used those tools with me to learn as much information as she could about my childhood and my goals for the future.



FINDING PERMANENCY

The CFE tools worked! Jessie and the CFE team were able to find more than half a dozen family members who all want to be there for me throughout my life. I was even given my very own family tree that I hung on my wall so I can look at it every day! Through all of this, I found out I have a grandmother who thought I had already been adopted, but when she saw my adoption profile she knew she had to reach out and find me. Now I get to have regular visits on the phone with my grandma and grandpa and I just love it! I get to spend the holidays this year meeting a lot of my family. I can't wait! And we even have plans for me to move in with my grandparents permanently in the New Year!



A NEW BEGINNING

I just can't believe it, I don't feel all alone anymore and I am excited about getting to live with my grandparents. I will actually be with people who know me and love me! Jessie is very special to me. I know she worked very hard to find my family and make sure I wasn't forgotten about. She made sure I received the support, help, and care I need to heal and thrive. Every child in foster care should have a CASA Volunteer like Jessie.



THIS IS A SINGLE STORY OF MANY

Unfortunately, Lucas experienced many scary times before someone stepped up to help him. Sadly, over 1,250 children in our community last year experienced abuse, neglect, and maltreatment in their own homes. Fortunately, there is hope. For this community problem, there is a community solution. It's CASA.

What can you do to be part of this community solution? Give today to ensure kids like Lucas have someone like Jessie speaking up for their best interest.

Give a child the gift of
a CASA Volunteer.

DONATE TODAY.

"If it weren't for CASA and the CFE tools we have, Lucas would have gone on thinking he had no one out there. Thankfully now he knows his family, he speaks to them, he thinks of them, and he can't wait to reunite with them." – Jessie Kinney