

THE IMPACT

FIRST STEP FUNDING STORIES

Lifelong Links



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

Thomas entered foster care in 2009. After his parents' rights were terminated, his younger siblings were quickly adopted. As the eldest in an abusive and drug inflicted home, Thomas had a more difficult time adjusting to "traditional home life." He burned through foster homes and caseworkers, was labeled defiant, and was eventually placed in a residential, mental health facility hours from his home in Fayetteville.

Throughout his six years in foster care, Thomas could always rely on one person - his CASA, Kathleen. Kathleen had been there for him standing up for his educational, therapeutic, and medical needs. As he approached his 5th birthday, Kathleen was terrified to think of Thomas aging out of the system at 18. Around that time, the Lifelong Links program was launched at CASA. Thomas' case was referred to Lifelong Links for family finding services.

The Lifelong Links volunteer tracked down an extensive list of biological family members and identified a few who were willing to take guardianship of Thomas. After months of family therapy and screening, the judge agreed to the permanent placement. On September 22, 2016, Thomas finally went "home" to grow up in a family, not a system. Without the Lifelong Links program, Thomas would still be waffling from placement to placement and counting down the days until he could sign himself out of care at 18. We are happy to report on his very first semester back in a traditional school, Thomas made the honor roll!



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