



Lutheran Family Services
OF VIRGINIA, INC.

Mission Works

W I N T E R 2 0 1 0 - 1 1

Looking for grandpa

Old-fashioned detective work and new search tools help find JD's family

When James came into foster care, he was a chubby-cheeked two-year-old whose family had been ripped apart by neglect and drug abuse. Like many kids with complicated histories, the ties that bound him to his extended family became looser and looser. Add multiple foster care placements, the death of his mother, and a move to another state, and they finally came undone completely.

But because of powerful "family finding" tools and good old-fashioned detective work, JD, as he prefers to be called, has been reunited with a family he thought was lost.

LFSVA adoption worker Amber Brown was able to connect JD with members of his family by digging

deep into his record. This type of intense data mining is part of family finding, an approach pioneered by Kevin Campbell, a former social worker in Washington state who was inspired by the success of the Rwandan government in finding families of displaced children.

The techniques are so promising that LFSVA is partnering

with several localities to bring Campbell to the Tidewater area for further training.

Since JD was already part of an LFSVA program that seeks to find permanency for hard-to-place children, Brown had been using multiple tools to find JD an adoptive family and had even located a couple that was interested in adopting him. But inspired by Campbell's success

Not only was his grandfather alive, but he was eager to see him.



Photo by Fernando and Susan Hernandez

James

stories, she decided to give finding JD's biological family one last shot.

Brown and JD's social worker traveled to West Virginia to review his records, which is tedious work and can result in a lot of dead-ends. Often there are no addresses, phone

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Chiquita holds her acceptance letter

Honor roll teen has bright future

Chiquita Vaughn, 18, knows hard work. While maintaining excellent grades in high school, she also worked long hours to save for college and a car. Both efforts have paid off; she has been accepted at Old Dominion University and will enter college with strong study and life management skills.

This kind of success might have seemed out of reach when Chiquita came to the LFSVA foster care program in 2004, but with the support of foster families and dedicated

staff, Chiquita is optimistic about her future. In five years she sees herself as a college graduate, enjoying a career that combines her interest in fashion and journalism, and working part-time on her master's degree.

"I'm about to be in the real world," she says, "which is exciting." Chiquita will live on campus, and LFSVA foster mom Patricia Taylor will miss her energetic presence. Chiquita has a good role model in sister Alexis, who is a freshman at Virginia State University.



Seeing is believing... and adopting

That's the idea behind using print and the internet to create audio-visual portraits of older children in Virginia who are available for adoption. With funding from the state of Virginia, hard work on the part of our staff, and professional photographers who are donating their services, LFSVA is hoping to connect children like Jeremy and Isaiah, below, with families to love. You can also read about Dontayez and his new family on page 4. Dontayez was one of the first children in LFSVA's Child-Specific recruitment program. For more information about the children profiled below, call 1.800.359.3834 or email ksitterson@lfsva.org.

Isaiah enjoys martial arts



Energetic, outgoing and playful, Isaiah has his eye set on being a policeman. This seventh-grader makes friends easily, likes to dance and hopes to use his natural agility to excel in martial arts. He enjoys sports, especially football,

and hopes to go out for the track team. Isaiah would like a home with pets, and a family that could give him the love, attention and support that he needs.

Photographer seeks family



Active and sociable, Jeremy enjoys photography and sports, especially basketball, football, and tennis. He also loves animals and participating in Boy Scouts. Jeremy is creative and curious, so it is not surprising that he likes to learn and that his

favorite subjects in school are social studies and science. Jeremy dreams of an active two-parent family to support his educational and emotional needs. Photo by Fernando and Susan Hernandez

FINDING GRANDPA

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numbers are wrong, or people remarry and names change. Luckily, deep in the files, they found the name of his grandfather. Brown arranged to have his name entered into the search software. The result: addresses of 16 relatives, including that of his paternal grandfather, JD's closest relative.

She showed the names to JD, and was disappointed when he told them that his grandfather had died. Brown decided to send a carefully worded letter to the current resident of the address anyway, and mailed it on a Friday with fingers crossed.

On Monday, she got a phone call that changed JD's life. It was from his grandfather's wife. Not only was his grandfather alive, but they were both eager to see him.

Brown discovered that JD's father had had no contact with the family for more than a decade and that his grandfather had not seen him since he was a toddler. Even more astonishing was news that the couple had custody of JD's 16-year-old half-brother, whom they had raised from infancy.

JD still struggles to overcome the emotional and behavioral fallout of a life spent in numerous group homes and foster care. But the hope is that surrounded with a loving family, all of whom

live within an easy drive of one another, he will get the support and love he needs to thrive. If all goes well, JD will go to live with his grandparents and brother in the spring.

Ideally, says Brown, family finding would take place as soon as possible, and not after a decade as in JD's case. And, Brown adds, not all families want to be found. Some families choose not to be involved or after an initial burst of interest fade away.

But at the very least, she says, family finding work gives children their family history, photographs and memories, support, and a sense of identity that they will have for the rest of their lives.

A \$15,000 grant from the **Altria Employee Community Fund** and \$4,800 from the **BJ's Charitable Foundation** will help LFSVA's MentorMatch continue to recruit and train mentors. Fifty mentors in the greater Richmond and Hampton areas are working with young people from the child welfare system. Could you be a mentor? Call 1.800.359.3834 or visit mentormatch.info to find out more.

For TJ, mentoring is a match made in heaven

Helping a boy become a man



TJ and mentor Robert Thornhill

Imagine you are a boy who has never had a stable male role model. Imagine if you read and write on a second-grade level. Imagine you are on the cusp of adulthood.

That was 16-year-old TJ in 2007 before he went to live with Mary and Rhonda Copeland, a mother-daughter foster family recruited and trained by Lutheran Family Services and who are now his permanent guardians.

The Copelands were delighted when TJ was matched with Robert Thornhill, a technical assistant at Dupont, father of two, graduate student and LFSVA volunteer mentor.

"He'll just come and says he needs TJ and off they go for the day," says Mrs. Copeland.

Now 19 years old, TJ often goes with Robert when he volunteers to winterize houses or mow lawns

for the elderly. Robert attends TJ's recreational basketball league, keeps track of how he is doing in school, and makes sure that he knows what is going on in TJ's life.

Even though TJ's cognitive limitations will not change, because LFSVA connected him with loving, caring adults, he is learning how to have successful relationships, how to give back to his community, and most importantly, how to be a man.

MentorMatch connects caring adults to young people up to the age of 18 who are involved in the child welfare system in the Richmond and Hampton metropolitan areas.

To learn how you can inspire the future by becoming a mentor, email tgoldman@lfsva.org, call 1.800.359.3834 or visit www.mentor-match.info.



Human Warmth Fund helps keep the heat on

More than 100 individuals and families benefit from the all-volunteer effort

They are mothers with young children and erratic child support, young people with minimum wage jobs, disabled older adults living on a meager income, or heads of households who can't find work.

Their stories may be different, but the people we have heard from this winter are all facing the same alarming crisis: they can't pay their heating bill and are in imminent danger of having the heat cut off. But with help from the Human Warmth Fund, they do not have to choose between heat and food or medicine.

This winter the Fund has helped more than 100 households in Tide-

water Virginia, disbursing almost \$12,000 to help pay heating bills.

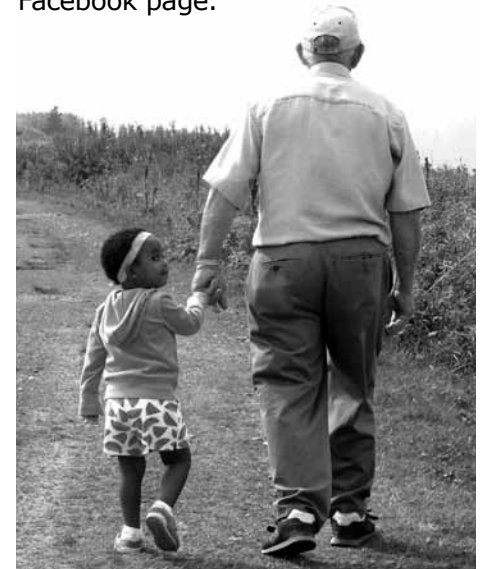
Supported by 35 Tidewater Lutheran Churches and managed by Lutheran Family Services of Virginia, the fund is staffed by volunteers housed at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Norfolk.

If you would like to help support the Human Warmth Fund, please call Ellen Bushman, LFSVA Director of Development, at 757.722.4707 or email her at ebushman@lfsva.org.

Your gift could make the difference between a warm comfortable sleep or a restless, dark and frigid night.

Congratulations to Marian

Green of Palmyra, Va., for her grand prize-winning photo of daughter Sage and Sage's great-grandfather, Smiles Green (below). To view all the entries and stories from the LFSVA Family Focus Photo Contest, visit our AdoptLFSVA Facebook page.



VISIT US AT WWW.LFSVA.ORG



Dontayez

Dontayez, now 12, wrote down when asked what kind of family he wanted. D, as he likes to be called, was connected with his adoptive family through the LFSVA Child Specific Recruitment program, a state-

'A mother, father, if possible children...'

Your gift **changes** lives

“A mother, father, if possible children” is what

funded effort that finds families for older children in foster care.

LFSVA worked with adoptive parents Denise and Larry Greenwood, and on Sept. 21, 2010, D officially became a part of the family. Says Denise, herself one of four adopted siblings, “He nearly knocks me off my feet when he runs up to hug me.

We can't imagine life without him.”

For his part, D is settling in nicely, experiencing his first plane ride to meeting Denise's relatives in England, making the honor roll, enjoying friendly Xbox rivalries with his adoring brother, Jacob, 10, and chilling on family boat trips on Lake Anna. Your gift changes lives—forever!



We thank you for your passion, your trust in us and the honor you give us by supporting our programs

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Important information about the IRA rollover. If you are 70½ or older, you may be interested in the restoration of the IRA rollover, retroactive to January 2010 and in effect through December 2011. The Rev. George Sims of the Mission Office for Planned Giving will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the rollover or assist you in making a gift to Lutheran Family Services. His number is 877-526-2448.