



**September 2010**

**JUSTIN AND JAMES**

\* Names have been changed to protect the identities of minors.

Justin\* and James\* came to the attention of social services in the fall of 2007 when their school became suspicious that the boys were not attending classes. Their mother lost her apartment and didn't show up for court, her court ordered treatment plan for parenting, drug addiction counseling or therapy. All attempts to find the boys' father failed and they had to be put in foster care. Their mom didn't visit or call the boys for a year and she told the court it was because she lost her billfold. At that time it was apparent that the court would need to terminate her parental rights.

Social services and the GAL made extensive searches for relatives who could provide a home for the boys, but because of a criminal element and gang activity in the family, the boys were put in yet another foster home. Unfortunately, the caseworker soon discovered that the treatment in the foster home was emotionally abusive and neglectful. She immediately picked up the boys and brought them to a foster home that was thankfully willing to take two adolescent boys on such short notice. They had only the clothes they were wearing and lost all of their belongings. As their CASA, I made an attempt to retrieve those belongings to no avail. Those little things were all they had in the world. They had to change schools in the middle of the year and adjust to new surroundings. They had missed a lot of school and consequently there were many educational issues that were in need of attention.

In the summer of 2009, I was put on the case as their Court Appointed Special Advocate and met with Justin and James. They talked about the trauma they experienced by being removed from their mother's home and the hurt they incurred in their former foster home. We spent many hours over cheeseburgers talking about who they wanted to become and who they could be in life. I wanted to spend as much time with them as possible so they would know that even though they were abandoned by their biological parents, they still have tremendous value and

potential. My husband and I were part of a team that worked hard so that Justin and James could have hope for a good future.

Justin and James were adopted in April 2010. Justin is realizing his dream of playing football for his high school. James has had some difficult adjustments, but he is also playing sports. Justin changed from an angry young man who expected to spend the rest of his life in gangs because that was all he knew, into a young man who wanted a productive life. James loves to express his dreams about becoming a businessman and traveling the world. They are so resilient for all they have been through, and have a wonderful sense of humor that makes us laugh all the time.

Best of all, the boys are in a forever home, safe and have all their needs provided for by caring parents. Justin and James will always have a special place in our hearts!

John and Joy  
CASA Volunteers