



**July 2014**



### **Success Story: Parker**

Parker\* had an incredibly unstable upbringing; the first time he was removed from his mother's home was at 3 months old. He experienced abuse and neglect in multiple homes he resided in which led to behavioral and psychological concern when determining the best permanent home for him.

His father and his father's side of the family is entirely unknown and has no part in Parker's upbringing. In 2012, Parker's caseworker suggested his case be referred to the Family Finding program in order to possibly find

### **Family Finding New Team Member!**

Hello Family Finding advocates! A Family For Every Child is pleased to announce that Rochelle Lewis has joined our Family Finding team!

A note from Rochelle:

"My name is Rochelle Lewis and I am very happy to be a part of the team here at A Family For Every Child. I have focused my education on women and children in crisis and family interventions at Lane Community College, and will continue on in this as I pursue my Bachelor's degree. I am happy to be working for an organization that focuses on children in need, as well as children at risk- not only in our community but nationwide. I have always had an interest in the Heart Gallery, so I am ecstatic to be a part of

supportive connections with biological relatives.

The Family Finding volunteer program mined Parker's files, performed internet searches on relevant names, and ultimately attempted to contact possible relatives. Relatives contacted were interviewed to learn more information about them and decide whether or not they would be a good influence on Parker. After these contacts were made, the Family Finding team held a meeting to further determine which relatives and other loved ones would then be invited to the Family Meeting.

Hard work paid off and the Family Finding program was able to hold a meeting with Parker's maternal aunt, Maria\*, her husband Will\*, his maternal uncle, Jake\*, and his maternal aunt, Janet\*. It was determined that the best course of action in order to introduce Parker to his relatives would be to send letters with information about his family followed by telephone calls while a therapist was present until the parties were well acquainted. Parker's aunt Maria is very interested in not only being a large part of his life, but possibly being his permanent home. This is incredibly positive for Parker and his

something bigger than myself!"

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## America is Stronger When Children Live in Families

*From the Huffington Post*  
6/18/2014

**This post is co-authored with Joe Kroll and Irene Clemens**

There wasn't a dry eye in the Today Show audience last Friday when Demille Cole-Heard paid tribute to his grandfather -- the man he said showed him how to be a man. He testified saying of the man who raised him, there could be no greater father figure.

The young man tricked his grandfather, Charles Warthan, by saying he needed his support as he tried out for The Voice. Instead he really wanted to publically honor the man who worked at least two jobs to support him, after he'd already raised his own children, and encouraged him to pursue his dreams.

His grandfather had always dreamed of singing in front of a large audience so together they made that dream come true singing the Star Spangled Banner on the morning show. They made their voices heard in the land of the free and home of the brave.

This week our three organizations are

future as he has had little contact with his biological relatives since an early age. He now knows that he is loved and cared about by his family and has not been forgotten.

Parker is doing very well adjusting to becoming a high school student. He is very excited to be starting basketball in the winter and baseball in the spring. He recently attended his first homecoming dance and is developing meaningful relationships with family and friends and living his life as a typical teenage boy. Parker has had continued contact with Maria, Jake, and Janet and recently received gifts from his family members which has further proved their support and love as they develop their relationships.

\*name has been changed

A Family For Every Child has been conducting Family Finding in Oregon for over 5 years, and was a pioneer in the Family Finding volunteer model. If you are interested in becoming a Family Finding volunteer, please complete an [online volunteer application](#).

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## Available Volunteer Roles

coming together to launch a common voice in support of families across the country like Demille's. We'll be lifting our voices for families that are often overlooked-kin (grandfamilies), foster and adoptive families.

Together we've formed Advocates for Families First an alliance to support families like the stable, encouraging and loving one in which Charles raised his grandson.

Our goal is to build a unified national movement to support families who care for children and youth, promote their healing and help them thrive when their birth parents are unable to do so.

Why? We know children and youth do better in families. Young people can age out of a system, but they never age out of a family.

Still more than 23,000 youth age of foster care each year without any family connection. At the same time, grandfamilies continue to struggle to meet the needs of children in their care. Kin are still asked to do the same work as foster parents with fewer to no supports.

For every child in foster care living with a relative, nearly 25 are being cared for by relatives outside the system. If even half those kids entered the foster care system it would cost our country more

**File Mining: Be a sleuth!**  
Search for clues in a child's case file about their relatives, heritage, and lost loved ones in order to connect them with safe and supportive family members they may have lost touch with.

**Internet Research:** Search online for relatives' current contact information, more family connections, ancestral history, and more!

**Calling and Engagement:** Call and speak with family members and lost loved ones to determine who would be a safe and supportive connection for the child, and to gather more information about the family tree.

**Genogram Specialist:** Build genograms (family trees) using genopro software, and research ancestry.

**Follow Up Volunteer:** Call relatives and connections after Family Meetings on a regular basis to see if they maintain contact with the child, what level of support they are providing, and if the child is being adequately supported.

For more information on volunteering for A Family For Every Child's Family Finding program, email [famfind@familyforeverychild.org](mailto:famfind@familyforeverychild.org)

than 6.5 billion dollars a year.

How does this translate for the families? According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Stepping Up for Kids, foster care benefits provide about 52 percent of what it takes to raising a child. Child Only Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, which is what most grandfamilies access if they access any financial support, only provides about 25 percent of what it takes to raise a child.

All the sadder, the kids in care are seldom asked what they want.

Take Catherine Sanders. She came into foster care when she was 13. She was never told adoption was an option, she was only asked what her plan was when she aged out.

On Capitol Hill this week, her voice was clear when she told policy makers, "Remember that you get to go home at the end of the day, but kids (in foster care) have to live it 24/7."

She went on to say "I know that I am 'someone' and I am becoming even more a 'someone.' But I want to be a 'someone' who has a family cheering her on."

Catherine wants what Demille found with his grandfather. Unconditional

or call 541-343-2856.

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love.

So what can we do? Simple, put families first. And here's how.

We urge policy makers to support:  
Providing kids who have been abused or neglected with a family that will stay with them forever.

Prioritizing family care over institutions when it's necessary to remove a child from the birth family.

Preparing caregivers to meet the complex needs of children coming into their homes.

Empowering youth and family voices so they can advocate for what they want and need.

Ensuring that children and youth have opportunities to participate fully in their life planning, and that caregivers have the right to make decisions for the children in their care.

Giving children and youth the support and services they need to be stable and successful in their lives.

Cole-Heard learned from his grandfather that hard work, love and persistence always pay off. He made a grand gesture honoring his grandfather.

Now it's time we join together to

celebrate and give voice to children like him and the families who step up.

*Donna Butts is the executive director of Generations United. Joe Kroll is the executive director of the North American Council on Adoptable Children. Irene Clements is the president of the National Foster Parent Association. Advocates for Families First is a new alliance of the three organizations.*

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