

Responses to *Fostering Perspectives* Writing Contest (May 2007)

On these pages are some of the responses we received to the newsletter's latest writing contest, which asked children and youth who are or have been in foster care to tell us about something that seemed bad at the time but turned out to be a good thing.

To read more entries, go to
www.fosteringperspectives.org/fp_v11n2/kids_pages.htm.

—*John McMahon, Editor*

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Alesha, age 18

My mom's in prison for 14 years for murder. My dad and me were never really close . . . I was adopted at age 3 by my aunt and uncle. I lived with them till I turned in my uncle for sexually abusing me at age 14. I then went and lived with just my aunt cause her and my uncle broke up. My baby brother and me moved in with me. We lived there for about 3 or 4 months. We couldn't live in my aunt's town due to the fact that her kids keep saying I was lying. Basically, my mom's side of the family didn't like me because of it.

At the age of 15 while living with my aunt still, I began to get really depressed but never would talk about it 'cause I didn't trust no one. I was so depressed that I started running away from school, getting in fights at school for no reason, and not listening to my aunt. I got sent off to detention, then returned back to my aunt's. I done that for about 3 or 4 times, then I ran away and they sent me to a group home. . . . I got sent back to my aunt's but continued not to listen and kept running away. Then I got sent to detention. . . . I was in there for 10 months 'cause every time it got time for me to go home I messed it up so I wouldn't have to go live with my aunt again. I then let them know in one of my meetings that I didn't want to live with my aunt anymore cause I went through hell.

I then started to give the group home staff a chance to help me. I began to open up about everything in my life and what made me make the choices I made before. I acted out cause all I wanted was

to be with my real mom but she was always in prison and never was around.

I also realized that I didn't care about getting sent off to detention cause it made me feel closer to my mom. It hurt me so bad that I ended up trying to get my aunt far away from me cause my mom was a negative role model. My mom lied to me, stole in front of me, and got drunk in front of me. She even helped me run away one time. I knew that my mom was a negative role model but I didn't want to accept that. . . .

In February 2006 I got put into a therapeutic foster home. . . . I've been here for almost a year and I like it here and it turned out to be good after all the negative things I said about it. I'm thankful to have known [my therapeutic foster parent] now I can be what I want to be when I turn 18, knowing that there are people and a family I can turn to for help.

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Brittany

This past summer, I went to a program . . . located in Arizona. My adopted parents sent me to try to help me get my life together. I was making the wrong decisions about things, and I was heading to my first year in high school, and neither I or them thought I was ready to take on such a change.

The program (a wilderness camp) is based on the Native Americans, and how they lived thousands of years ago. I arrived there on June 7 (or 8, I forget which it was) and stayed on the trail until August 18.

I was out in the wilderness for six weeks! I could not have anything I was used to on the trail—for example, deodorant, body spray, body wash, hair gels, or anything like that. I could only bring with me my hairbrush and my hair ties. . . .

The first week (called the rabbit stick week), I had to learn how to set up my shelter and make my own food using the fire that I had to build. At first I thought the food pack was gross so I didn't really eat. However, when I realized that was all I was going to have for the next six weeks I just dealt with it. The water there was not very great. My first week I had "cow tank" water, which was water that the cows go in and move around in, and drink.

However, there was this one week that I actually had clear water, and it was better than all of the other water I had since I was there.

My last week my parents got to come on the trail with me, and I got to show them what I learned while I was there. And I also got to make them food—they thought that it was good.

What I like the best about the trails is that it taught me that I could do whatever I wanted to do, if I just put my mind to it. Also that I got to build my own fire out of sticks and I had to maintain a supply of tinder (certain tree bark that when you blow the coal that you got into flames it would catch fire).

[This program] really helped me get my life on the right track, and I am glad that my parents sent me there, because if they did not then I would have not been as successful as I am today. I have used the experience in my everyday life.

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Benita, age 15

I am a young lady who has been in foster care for 2 years now. This for me is a lot better than before, because before I got into foster care I was living with an alcoholic mom who put me into tight places that made me the person I am today. I was made to be the parent of the house and had to depend on my boyfriend that I had until I was 13 years old, when I learned how to be an independent young lady.

Well, things at home started getting so bad that I had to be put into foster care, which I thought was going to be the worst thing ever because first of all I didn't know the family I was going to, I had to adjust to their rules, then I also heard some bad things that had happened to some children while they were in foster care. So when I first got into foster care I stayed to myself most of the time and then I finally started to open slowly to the family.

To my surprise, when I opened up I ended up making a lot of friends and got to know more. I had also learned some valuable lessons like how I should depend on God and not boys. I had also learned that I should live my life as a teen and not as an adult. So it seems to be that foster care has its advantages and disadvantages.

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Courtney, age 16

I have a sister who is 15 years old. We are both foster children. We have been in foster care for 5 months now. . .

I was sexually harassed by my mother's boyfriend's uncle. I told her about it and she didn't even want to do anything about it. Other family members and friends had to convince her to report it. We finally reported it and went to court. Her boyfriend's friend sexually harassed me and she didn't do anything about it. In Florida, one of the family members raped me when I was only a little girl and she didn't even care. I used to call the police and make up things just so I can get out of the house because I didn't want to live with her. I made a fire just because I wanted to leave. I even tried to commit suicide because I felt so bad, but God wouldn't let me. Now 16 years later I finally told someone because I've been having dreams about hitting her back and I didn't want that to happen.

My sister has cerebral palsy and basically I was the only one physically taking care of her. I felt like I was the mother and sister. My mother has put her self-esteem down Instead of encouraging her she was doing the opposite. She used to beat her so bad sometimes she would put bruises on her. So both of us finally stood up for what was right and that's how we got here. We went to court and now I have found out that our "mother" never adopted us, she just took us. So I thank God for what He has put us through because if he didn't do it I wouldn't be here now to tell the story. I really wanted people to hear my story.

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Kathryn, age 15

Two years ago I was taken out of my adoptive home and put into this foster home. I never thought I would be able to cope in another home, but after two years I have changed so much.

The first day I was in the foster home I would not listen to them and I wouldn't do anything. I could not watch my mouth. I could not keep my hands to myself. I was always getting in fights at school. I was always getting suspended. I thought I would never love anybody like I love my adoptive parents ever again, but I love my foster parents a lot now. . . .

I am not perfect but I'm trying hard to get by. Although this much has happened to me I'm still loved by so many people. I tell my friends that there is always somebody that loves you so don't ever give up. Wherever you go there is more people out there that love you than know you.

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Kimberly, age 11

Three years ago, my two sisters and I were put in foster care. I was eight and they were one and three years old. Thankfully we were all placed in the same home.

Before we moved in, I was used to being in charge. Then my foster mom took over and that created a lot of problems for me. I thought I knew more about my sisters than her. I was used to protecting them and it was very hard for me not to take care of them myself. It made me mad.

All three of us have now been adopted by the same family. It's not been easy, but I've learned to back off being a mom to my little sisters. I'm learning how to be a good big sister. I'm glad now my parents are taking care of them and me.

I still boss them around sometimes and we have our bad moments, but I have more fun playing with them. My new mom and I have also written to each other in a journal about some of our problems. It helped us to understand each other more and become closer.

It was a big adjustment in my life and it started out bad, but now I know what it is like to have a normal family and that's a very good thing.

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M, age 13

It seemed bad at first when
I became a foster child when
I was 10 I thought everything
Was going to end. Because I
Felt lost without my real family
Being with me. But my first foster
Parents were cool. Their names were

Yvette and Frank. I lived there for almost
12 months. Then I lived with my
Second foster parent whose name was
Miss BJ. She was nice to me
But we had our ups and downs.
I lived there for 1 year then I moved
To my third foster mother and I still
Live with her now. I'm 13 but it seems
Like it is better living with my third
Foster mom. We travel everywhere
But only on holidays. And sometimes
We go to see my mom and brother and
Sister and my family, too. So now,
Since I live with my foster mom,
I don't feel lost.

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Lord Above

by Marina, age 16

I do believe the Lord above created this family for me to love. He picked them out from the rest because he knew I would love them the best. My life was headed down a long scary road, a road of terror and a road no one knew till my life changed January 16 when a policeman and a case manager came and got me from school and brought me to this family. Now that I'm free to live my life the way God wanted it to be I can say I'm at home where I belong. I never knew there were kind loving people out there through the bad, but for the good. Thank you for telling me you love me and I am someone!

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Nathaniel, age 14

I've lived in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. My family is now spread out throughout North Carolina and Georgia. My great aunt (foster parent), my sister, and I live in a house in North Carolina. So do my other aunt and her two children. The rest of the family lives in Georgia. Because of the big split up it's hard

for everyone to talk. No one communicates at all, we hardly ever get to see each other. All that changed on November 20, 2006.

On November 20, 2006 my father passed away. I was ripped to shreds. It was hard for the whole family. Everyone was upset, trying to see if I was OK. Everyone was calling around, talking to everyone, helping get arrangements for the funeral and helping pay for it. I stopped to think about what was happening and I realized that the family was coming together.

So, it was a touch time getting through it, but we did it. It is rather sad that it took a tragedy like this one to get the family together, but it was worth it. I guess you could say it turned around.

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Ronda, age 15

Life has been rough for me. When I was 7 the sexual abuse started and continued till age 13. At age 9 the physical and emotional/mental abuse began. No one would listen . . . I had no one to help me.

One day I simply said, "I've had it!" I attempted suicide over 20 times by becoming anorexic and bulimic, cutting and burning myself. I got really mad one night and ran away from home and once again attempted suicide by taking a big piece of metal and slicing my arm . . .

Then I ended up in the hospital (a mental institution). I thought my life was ruined and that I was really bad off . . . but after I got out of the hospital I was put in foster care. Now my life is better. I couldn't be happier because I have the family I've longed for all my life!

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Stephanie, age 13

My story starts out when my sister and I had been in a bad situation when we were getting beaten and abused and not taken care of. One day when I went to school, I told my best friend what was going on at my house. That's when she asked me if I wanted to tell the school counselor. I was scared but did it any way.

I went in the counselor's office and she asked what was going on. So, I told her what my problem was. That's when she said she was going to call child protective workers. I had said OK so she had called them.

They came up there and I told them what I had told the counselor. They said they were going to go to my sister's school and talk to her. So after that I went back to my class, waiting to see what was going to happen next when I got home.

By the time it came to the end of the day, my heart felt like it was going to pop! I was so scared I didn't even want to get on the bus. I told myself, "You can do this." I sat beside my best friend on the bus and told her what had happened.

As the bus started to move, my heart started to feel in pain and I asked myself why am I hurting inside, because I was doing the right thing. I really didn't want to go home because I was afraid so I asked my friend if I could come to her house. She called her mom but her mom said I couldn't come there. So, I had to get off at my stop. I felt like I was going to pass out, I wanted to hurt myself. As I started to walk down the road to my house, I stopped at the mail box and took a deep breath. I slowly walked to the front door.

My relative was home and I was really scared that he knew that I told. A little while later, I saw the white car coming and then someone knocked on the door. My mom opened it up and they said my relative was under arrest for abuse. They told me and my sister to get some clothes because we were going to another house. I was scared and I thought it was going to be bad at the time but once I started to get to know my foster family—I argued with them sometimes—but it turned out to be really good.

Being in a new situation, new family, new everything with a new life again, it was everything that I could wish for. Now I don't have to worry about being mistreated anymore. Me and my sister are happy. My foster parents let me come into their house as if we were their own children and part of the family.

So, even though I thought it would be really bad to move to another house, it turned out to be good.

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“Y,” age 16

We went to a lady’s home. It seemed like everything was going fine, so I was liking it. But she was just putting on an act to get the money. She wanted to adopt me and my sister. So she did. . . . She lied and messed my life up. For the most part she messed it up when she would go on summer trips to New York and not take me. When she did get back I would ask her about my real family because she knew my real aunt. So when I asked did she say “Hey,” my adoptive mom would say yeah, she said she don’t want you in her life, she don’t love you, and then my adoptive mom would put on an act and say I just didn’t want to take you because I didn’t want you to get hurt. And I was believing every lie.

When I asked my foster mom to look my aunt’s number and address in the computer, she did and we found it. I called my aunt and when I spoke to her she cried and I asked, “Why are you crying?”

She told me, “Baby, I haven’t spoken to you in a long time. I miss you. I love you.”

I said, “But my adoptive mom said this and that about you not wanting to do anything with me.”

My aunt said, “Listen to me, Sweetie.” So I did and as I did she began to tell me how my adoptive mom took me in for the money. My aunt even said, “She took all the money I sent for you.”

So now I’m finding the real truth about why she took me in. If it wasn’t for my foster mom I wouldn’t know the truth and I would still be thinking my family don’t want me. That’s why I’m not with them, but that’s what my adoptive mom been saying.

That’s why right now it may not be my wish to be in foster care, but I’m glad I found someone who would just tell me the truth and would let me use the phone to call my family.

Now all I’m waiting for is my 18th birthday so I can live with my aunt. It is sometimes good to be in a home where you know you gonna get food, water, and love. That’s where I’m at now.