

## *Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents*

### Relentlessly Fighting for Permanency

The adoptions team out of the Mt. Vernon, Washington, office experienced a first this past month when they successfully returned a legally free child to their biological parent, reinstating the father's parental rights.

The youth came into care over a decade ago in 2010. Prior to termination of parental rights in 2012, caseworkers did some family voluntary services (FVS) work with the family.

Since then, there have been 10 different group care placements and at least two adoptive placements that did not work but the youth and his caseworkers never gave up hope on finding a permanent home.

Over the past 4-and-a-half years, Angie, the youth's adoption specialist, worked to recruit and support this youth in achieving permanency. She started discussing the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process with the birth father back in 2016, as he was living out of State.

"Angie works with some of our most difficult youth but she never, and I mean never, gives up looking for permanent homes for her kids. Nor does she dismiss any potential option that the youth come up with themselves," said Christine, Angie's supervisor out of the Mt. Vernon office.

Even though the youth was legally free, in 2017, the Relative Search unit reached out to a dozen birth relatives, which resulted in responses and interest from the paternal family. In the meantime, Angie continued to recruit for an adoptive home, exploring any option that came forward, including the birth father.

After a placement with family in Maryland did not work out, a call was placed to the father again in 2018 to see if his circumstances would allow for completion of the ICPC and to be an active part of his son's treatment team.

He and his wife said yes and began to work immediately to get approved and have his son placed with him. After many, many roadblocks, phone calls and visits, he was able to finally move to Arkansas to be with his dad and step-mom in March 2020.

The father's parental rights were reinstated on September 29, and dependency was dismissed that same day at the request of the youth through his attorney.



“While this was a very long road, lots of hard work was done by Angie and the youth to make this happen,” said Christine. “Both of their dedication to achieving permanency and all the hard work they did really paid off.”



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