



## ENSURING SAFE AND LOVING HOMES FOR CHILDREN

Sarah. Bill. John. Wink. Mike. Maria. Each of these children was removed from an abusive home and united with a loving adoptive family through Children's Home Society of America (CHSA) affiliated organizations. They are just a handful of the millions of children whose lives we touch each year.

In fact, this year more than one million American children will suffer abuse and neglect—and more than 1,400 children will die at the hands of an abuser. At the same time, nearly 800,000 children will live in foster care environments. More than 100,000 of these children will be awaiting a loving, permanent adoptive home on any given day.

[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/publications/afcars\\_stats.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/publications/afcars_stats.htm)

The members of Children's Home Society of America are dedicated to ensuring that all children benefit from a safe and loving home. We are committed to preventing child abuse and neglect through parenting education and family support services. In situations where children are not safe in their birth families, we are dedicated to connecting children with foster and adoptive families who can help them overcome the trauma of their past and reach for their dreams.

Of those who eventually leave foster care in the United States – about 270,000 a year – half are reunited with their birth parents; 10 percent will live with relatives; and 18 percent will need an adoptive family. CHSA agencies seek the best solution for children in need of a safe and loving home. We are proud of our accomplishments, as represented in stories like these:

### SARAH FROM WISCONSIN

Sarah began life as the third eldest in a family that would rapidly grow to include nine more children. At age three she was removed from her birth home and placed in foster care with her younger sister, Mary. With the help of *Children's Service Society of Wisconsin*, both girls were adopted by the same foster mother.

*"I was born on March 28, 1987, but on June 30, 2000, the date of my adoption, I was truly given life. Before I met my adoptive mother, I would dream at night of getting a place to live where I wouldn't be hurt. One that had people who would treat me fairly, talk to me nicely and not constantly talk about getting rid of me and how much trouble I always seemed to be,"* said Sarah.

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, Sarah says, helped her go beyond being merely glad to be alive to truly enjoying her childhood.

*"I wanted a warm place to stay, I got a home. I wanted not to be hurt, I got hugged. I wanted a foster placement that would accept me, I got a forever family that showers me with love,"* she says.



Today, Sarah is studying hard, looking forward to college and harboring aspirations to become a lawyer and use her education to help children, especially teenagers. Sarah is going places, not because of where she has been, but because of where she is.

### WINK, BILL, JOHN AND MIKE FROM WEST VIRGINIA

Survival was a daily struggle for Wink, Bill, John and Mike, four brothers who spent their childhood in post-World War II West Virginia. The boys were forced to fend for themselves, as their parents were frequently absent for long periods of time. When their father was home, he would often drink and become abusive. Their mother would lock them in a closet or in the apartment so that she could go out.

In July 1948, their mother took the brothers to the Davis Child Shelter in Charleston, the first of what would become many *Children's Home Society of West Virginia* facilities for disenfranchised children. All four children were adopted. Although, as was often the case in mid-century America, each child was adopted by a different family.

Despite living apart, each child thrived in a loving adoptive home, and each gives thanks for their adoptive parents and Children's Home Society of West Virginia. Still, they never forgot what they had left behind at the Davis Child Shelter in the late 1940s—brotherhood, sibling love, shared survival. In 1969, the brothers were reunited after 20 years of separation and have become close since that time.

Over the years, they have been able to fill the gaps of the lost years and reminisce about the times they had together both at home and under the sheltering love of Children's Home Society.

Each in turn agrees: *"The best thing our mother ever did for us was to take us to the Davis Child Shelter."*

### MARIA FROM SOUTH DAKOTA

It is hard to comprehend what a five-year-old suffers at the hands of sexually abusive parents. Little Maria has had to live with those memories, as well as the times her father would hit her as a form of punishment.

As a result of her abuse, Maria was terrified of her father and became fearful of all men, going out of her way to avoid contact with them. She hoped in vain that by *"hard thinking about Mommy,"* trying to mentally will her mother to change, her mom would transform into someone who would take care of her and love her.

Eventually, parental rights were terminated for Maria's biological parents. But it took time to heal. When Maria entered therapy at *Children's Home Society of South Dakota*, she was fearful of attending outings in the community, afraid she might run into her father.

Maria was placed with a wonderful adoptive family. Maria's new family was patient and understood her need to heal from her past trauma and was willing to wait as the process of emotional attachment evolved.

Their patience and Maria's courage have been rewarded. Today, Maria is excelling in school and has a lot of friends. She's become quite an athlete, playing softball in the summer and basketball during the school year. Through the support of Children's Home Society of South Dakota, Maria and her adoptive family have survived hurt to create hope.