



MEET

ANTON



Anton is a youth who has had a long history with the child-welfare system since the time he was 7 years old. His mother required long-term psychiatric treatment, and due to Anton's autistic symptoms and at times unmanageable behavior, she was unable to maintain a safe and stable home for her son. After 56 referrals to child-protective services, Anton's mom surrendered her parental rights. During this same year, his father died of cancer.

Anton experienced failed guardianship placements with an aunt and uncle and then with his grandparents in Florida. None of the relatives knew how to manage his behavioral issues and special educational needs. At the age of 13, Anton was returned to New Jersey and placed in a non-relative resource home with two dads. This is where he met his CASA volunteer, Jeffrey.

Jeffrey, a very experienced CASA, was able to establish a friendly, trusting, and professional relationship with both Anton and his resource dads at their first meeting. Jeffrey quickly became a frequent visitor to the home and avid advocate for Anton. Jeffrey's communication and relationship-building skills brought several important stakeholders together as Anton's team. He encouraged the resource parents to send weekly emails to the full team with updates on Anton's progress and needs. When frustrations occurred and services were not adequate, Jeffrey's supportive and encouraging nature helped ease tensions to bring back the focus on what was in Anton's best interest.

Jeffrey was instrumental in facilitating Anton's educational plan and appropriate placement, as well as appropriate therapies. This allowed Anton to feel comfortable and to develop a strong, loving relationship with his resource dads. His behavioral issues decreased, and he welcomed his connection with Jeffrey, looking forward to their visits and talks.

When Anton turned 14 and was eligible for outings through CASA's Fostering Futures Program, Jeffrey always chose activities that were something new for Anton and included teachable experiences. Anton felt comfortable opening up to Jeffrey, knowing he would not be judged, that Jeffrey would be honest with him, and help him express himself to his resource dads without altercations.

Anton was adopted by his resource dads because of the ongoing support, encouragement, and consistency of Jeffrey's advocacy and mentoring. Jeffrey remains in the family's life, meeting with them socially and taking Anton hiking, golfing, and on other adventures. Anton's parents are very appreciative of the relationship that Jeffrey has with their son. It is a relationship that brings great joy to Anton, and the dads are grateful for Jeffrey's assistance to overcome several obstacles that almost veered them off the course towards adoption.