



MEET ANISA



This is a letter she wrote to her Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer Mary, who was by her side throughout the years.


Dear Mary,

I look up to you. You came into my life and changed it for the better. I used to struggle a lot. I was always depressed and super angry. You chose to believe in me and stay by my side every day. You would bring me food and we would crack jokes. I remember the first time I met you. You knew I loved food so you brought me Qdoba. I had a hard time trusting people and possibly came off as super rude. You were a volunteer so you didn't have to stay. You came into my life when I was 13 years old. I was never good with new people but somehow you made things smooth for me.

I come from a broken family with barely any support. For once, I have one person in my life who is always reliable. If I were in danger, you would be one of the first people I would call. I have not met someone so adventurous and full of life. You are always up to do anything of course if it's legal. I have horrible trust issues. I trust you with my life. I trust you enough to make the hardest decisions helping me figure out what's best. Every year on my birthday you make sure I feel special. We're not blood but we are close to it. We're family. I have a mother but she is not in my life and has not been for practically my whole life. I always think about how wonderful it would be to be your daughter.

Moral of the story is I appreciate you so much and I love you so much. I can't wait for you to see me graduate and do all the amazing things that come with it. Thank you for being you!

 Anisa

Anisa's story is one of resilience and success despite the trauma she suffered from being exposed to domestic violence, parental substance abuse, sexual abuse, and thoughts of suicide. Mary became her guiding light during the ten years she endured in foster care.

CASA of Morris and Sussex Counties equipped Mary with the skills and tools needed to help Anisa thrive. Through training, she learned how to make informed recommendations to ensure successful outcomes for Anisa. Mary provided essential information to personalize Anisa's needs to the court, recommend appropriate psychological, medical, and educational services, and advocate for critical placements and resources.

Mary remained by Anisa's side while she transitioned to multiple placements like foster homes, youth shelters, and treatment homes. When Anisa's mother surrendered her parental rights, Mary provided comfort

and solace. Throughout the duration of Anisa's case, CASA provided Mary with essential items including clothing, a laptop computer, books, and birthday and holiday gifts to give Anisa.

When Anisa received her first college acceptance letter, Mary was the first person she contacted. Mary even helped her move into her dorm room. While Anisa both worked and completed college courses, Mary served as a consistent, stable adult in her life. Without Mary, Anisa may not have applied for student loans, scholarships, or received SAT preparation. Mary was in the stands when Anisa graduated from Kean University with a degree in Community Health Education. Today, Anisa is working as a residential support specialist with adults with disabilities.

Mary not only connected Anisa with essential items and services, but provided her with the consistent, focused time and attention she needed to heal and thrive. More importantly, she empowered Anisa to be her own advocate and pursue her dreams.

Without her CASA volunteer, Anisa may have otherwise struggled to navigate foster care and life after aging-out of the system.



High School Graduation



College Graduation

