

YAB Blast



January 2021

MY ADOPTION STORY – Norma Cutting

Hello, my name is Norma Cutting. I am currently nineteen years old, and I was placed into foster care for the first time on December 8, 2016, with one of my younger sisters, who was thirteen at the time. We were in a kinship care placement with my paternal Aunt and Uncle. My two younger siblings, who were nine and seven at the time, were placed twenty minutes away with a close family friend. Although it was upsetting to be put into foster care because my parents couldn't get their act together, this time around was not so bad because I got to see my siblings and was able to maintain connections with my family. We would do things together like go to the beach, have family cookouts, eat dinner together, and just things I was not used to doing. During this time, we continued to have visits with our biological father.

In August of 2017, we were reunified with our biological father. The first couple of weeks with our dad went well. He seemed to have stopped drinking, doing drugs, and started acting more like a father than a friend. He had a job and was going to work daily. It seemed like our dad had turned his life around. However, after three months, things took a turn for the worst my dad had started exhibiting old behaviors. He started disappearing for days at a time, and just seemed to start being angry again. You could tell something in his brain had switched. Eventually, my siblings and I were placed back into foster care. But this time, we were placed in a traditional foster home placement instead of kinship care. My aunt was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, so we were unable to go back to her home. Once again, my sister and I were separated from our younger siblings. However, this time they were placed over forty minutes away from us, and we could not see them as often. But by the end of November, we were reunited and placed into the same foster home. The first few months in this new foster home went super well as everyone knows about the honeymoon phase. Our foster mom treated us fairly, met all our basic needs and was just loving and caring. Throughout this time, we continued to maintain contact with our aunt, and visit with our parents. The visits with my aunt were great, we would go to her home for holidays and it always felt like we never missed anything

with her. On the other hand, I believe I only went on one visit with my parents, and I could tell it would never be the same. We lived in the foster home for about 11 months. As I previously mentioned, everything seemed fine, but eventually over time, our foster mom started being emotionally abusive towards her adopted children and us. If something was not done her way, she would often talk down on us and say we would amount to nothing. We even witnessed her hitting one of her adoptive kids. My siblings and I stayed in the home for an additional week before children and youth removed us to a new placement. However, the agency left the two kids she had already adopted in the home. It was upsetting that we all had to move once again and were split up once more. It's like every time I believed everything was getting better and we were making progress, we'd go back to being apart. In September of 2018, siblings and I were separated once again and placed in two different foster homes. This time was different. My sister was placed with my younger brother as I was placed with my youngest sister. In December of 2018, my sibling was placed in the foster home with me. However, my sister who was often placed with me decided to remain in her current location 35 miles away. We were able to keep in contact with her through drug and alcohol classes and social media. But it wasn't the same as living with her and seeing her every day. Growing up I always hated being around my siblings all the time but every time we were separated it felt like my world was falling apart around me. In early March, my younger siblings and I were told they had found a family that would be willing to adopt all four of us, but the only downside was that they lived 3 hours away. It was a difficult decision because I did not want to move so far away from where I was living at that time, and I did not want to start over truthfully. I had a hard enough time making friends because I didn't trust anyone around me, and I didn't want the pain of people leaving my life, so I just did not let anybody in my space. My sister decided not to relocate with us because she loved the home where she was staying which left me torn between my younger siblings and my sister (a.k.a. my best friend). I knew I had to do what was best for me and the future of my two youngest siblings. I didn't want them to go through this process alone. I also did not want them to feel

like they lost me too.

When we first moved in June of 2019, I initially did not want to be adopted because I was already 18. I could live on my own and would not have to deal with the system anymore. However, by January, I saw how much being a part of this family meant to me and how I needed them to be a part of my life. October 15, 2020 at the age of 18 I, was officially adopted along with my youngest siblings.

This past summer, my biological mother tried to get in contact with me. I have had so much pain built up about this topic that it has been turning into hatred. I still have not reached out to her because I don't know what to say to her or even if I want to say anything at all.



For additional information about adoption, please visit the PA Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) - <http://www.adoptpakids.org/swan.aspx>

Indiana County YAB – Birthday Boxes

Indiana County YAB had their first recipient of a birthday box for a youth in placement! She LOVED the birthday box. The local YAB has been decorating the outside of the boxes to make them more festive and collecting items to put inside.



Armstrong County YAB

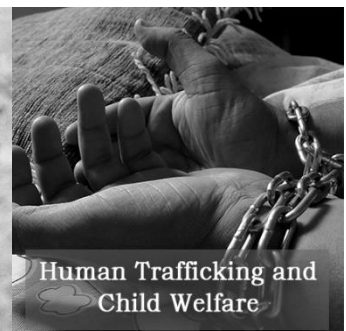


The Eastern Star Organization in Kittanning donated the fabric to make tie blankets, which the youth voted to donate to the Salvation Army as a service project. Pat Longwell from the Eastern Star came to IL Group to demonstrate how to make and cut the blankets. She worked with youth when they had questions and talked about the service organization of the Eastern Star, which is part of the Masons. Each youth made at least one blanket and a total of 12 blankets were donated. We also carved pumpkins and played Halloween bingo. A great session for everyone involved.



January: Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. This crime occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against his/her will. Child welfare caseworkers can be an invaluable resource in helping communities respond to the human trafficking of children. Children involved with child welfare are at risk for being targeted by traffickers because of their potentially unstable living situations, physical distance from friends and family, traumatic experiences, and emotional vulnerability. Therefore, it is imperative that child welfare caseworkers be at the forefront of efforts to identify, respond to, and prevent human trafficking. This bulletin explores how caseworkers can identify and support children who have been victimized as well as children that are at greater risk for future victimization. It provides background information about the issue, strategies caseworkers can use to identify and support victims and potential victims, and tools and resources that can assist caseworkers.



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