



## **Fostering Success in Foster Care Youth**

Every young person needs, and deserves, to have a caring adult in their life who listens to them, provides advice, and is there no matter what. For many youth, that person is a parent or relative. For youth in foster care, finding a reliable, caring adult can be much harder. Luckily, you can be a trusted adult by becoming a mentor to a youth in foster care. Not sure how volunteering one hour a week can make a difference? Learn how mentoring relationships changed the lives of these two young people in foster care:

### **Brandon**

As a youth in foster care, Brandon suffered from anxiety, low self-esteem and lack of experience in social situations. However, shortly after becoming placed in a mentoring relationship with Brett, Brandon began to show tremendous growth. By spending time together with his mentor Brett, Brandon became more confident and his sense of self-worth began to increase as well. "The mentoring relationship gave Brandon the confidence to be himself," commented Brett. "It told him that despite all the unfortunate events he's had in his life, he will always be worth someone else's time."

Brandon is now an advocate for youth in foster care and speaks publicly on a regular basis. Additionally, Brett has helped Brandon to improve relationships with his peers and to see the impact of his actions on his future goals. Together they are developing a plan for Brandon's future.

### **Nikki**

Nikki was matched with her mentor LeeAnn through a mentoring program specifically designed to help youth in foster care prepare for adulthood. At first, Nikki was a very shy, self-conscious girl but after receiving encouragement and support from LeeAnn, Nikki began to transform. "We developed a fun, positive, and trustworthy relationship that allowed Nikki to realize that she can build her life back up with positive people that she can trust, and who will always be there for her in the good times and the bad." Instead of being filled with self-doubt, Nikki became a confident, young woman capable of experiencing hope, joy and happiness for the first time in many years.

Nikki is now a student at Western Michigan University, however LeeAnn remains "one of the most influential people" in Nikki's life and they are still in close contact. As a result of their mentoring relationship, Nikki can now see a future where she will achieve her dreams, and no longer feels held back by her past.