



All Children Deserve a Permanent Family

ROBERT

Robert, now 17, lives with his great-grandmother (or as Robert calls her, G-G) Allyce. His early years were rough. His mother was only 14 when she had him. And both of his parents struggled with drug addiction, often failing to provide a stable life for their son. When Robert was five, his brother David was born, and both boys were shuttled between their mother's, their grandmother's and their great-grandmother's homes.

At ages six and one, the boys moved with their mother from Spokane, Washington to a town near where Allyce lived. As the boys' mother became more seriously addicted—now using meth and heroin—Allyce became more involved in her great-grandsons' care. Eventually, Allyce made arrangements to be a kinship foster parent to the boys.

After the chaos and instability of Robert's early life, including his brother David's move to live with his birth father, Allyce became Robert's legal guardian when he was 14. At the time adoption wasn't a choice for Robert as he didn't want to let go of the ties to his parents. After the legal guardianship came through, Allyce and Robert received subsidized guardianship benefits to provide the supports and services Robert needed. These benefits were absolutely necessary as Allyce's fixed income would not have been enough to cover medical costs and other essentials.

Now that Robert is turning 18, he has been thinking about what it means to have a permanent family and thinks adoption is the right choice for him. He has limited contact with his mother. His father has re-married and lives with his wife and children in Spokane, where Robert spends a few weeks each summer. A couple of months ago Robert and Allyce visited Robert's birth father and asked him for permission to be adopted by Allyce.

When Robert's dad asked why he wanted to be adopted after all this time, Robert, who is a member of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, explained, "I told him that I wanted to go to Temple and be sealed to G-G," explains Robert. "It's something we do in the Mormon Church to bind ourselves to our family forever." Robert's father gave his blessing.

Robert knows that he and his G-G make up a forever family. Subsidized guardianship was what he needed when he first came to live with her. "Now, I am overjoyed and ecstatic that I can be adopted by G-G. Things are going great in my life and at school. I play basketball and I am in the Close-Up program. This year we are raising money to go to Washington, D.C.," exclaims Robert. "I love it here and I don't ever want to leave."³

³ Excerpted from biography of Robert distributed at "Protecting Children, Promoting Permanent Families," a community forum sponsored by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, on August 17, 2006, in Helena, Montana.