TESTIMONIAL BY AMANDA P.

As a former foster child I can tell you that being in “the system" as it is so often is referred to can be terrifying, a scary adjustment, and just fear of what ifs that plague your mind. These types of negative responses can rob children of their wonder, their youthful happiness, and their excitement as a child. What is even harder than all of this, you ask? Surviving an abusive home, hiding lies to protect people who you are supposed to trust with your life. The dreadful feeling of having to go home to the same abuser over and over again wondering if anyone cares, if you truly deserve to be loved, and if someone is going to swoop in to save you from everything, all the while trying to remain hidden from everyone around you because you do not want to get abused worse if someone finds out and reports to Job and Families Services and then they have to come in to investigate.

Being a child in this situation is difficult because you feel like you are letting down yourself, your family, and others who do show you love out of fear of being "taken away”. Children are often conditioned to lie or make excuses for the reasons they have a scar, or repeated bruises on their bodies. An abused child is often not outgoing or outspoken and hide in the shadows waiting for the worst. In my story I had a social worker who cared enough about me it did not matter my age or "my problem" she was always there to make it better by getting me respite care or just taking me somewhere away from the madness.

Jefferson County Job and Family Services-Children Services Division helped place me in a foster home where I felt safe, loved and cared for, and most of all, respected. I will forever be grateful for the social worker that helped me, for her dedication, unwavering support, and kindness through the whole process. I am one of the unique and fortunate children that was in the system and has had such a fortunate upbringing past all the hard that I have endured.

My care givers, Joe and Suzanne. were one of the most loving and kind families I was placed with. I was shown, love, understanding, grace, and kindness I didn’t really know how to receive that love. In one specific instance I went home for the weekend to my biological parents, and I was so stressed out I had a panic attack when I got back to the foster home, and they were wonderful with navigating me through my crippling anxiety issues and fear.

I overcame domestic violence, sexual abuse, mental abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. I then went to college and double majored in 3 years for 2 associate degrees one in Paralegal and the other in Business Management with a minor in Accounting , all the while starting my family and having 3 children in those three years of schooling. I remained on the Dean’s list during that time, had great attendance and I volunteered as a Guardian Ad Litem for Stark County Courts for 3 years. I continue to reinvent myself and I am now a Nurse.

I am who I am and continue to be because of God and The Department of Jefferson County Job and Family Services-Children Services Division, Sharon T. (my 6th grade guidance counselor), and the beautiful foster families I have had the pleasure of being taken care of. I am so honored to have had this unforgettable experience in life and will be forever grateful.