



KARTER'S STORY

THERAPUETIC FOSTER CARE

When 4-year-old Karter was placed in the care of Embrace Florida Kids, he found something he'd never had before: love.

His parents had neglected and failed him so badly that he was removed from their home. He was placed with a family friend, who was supposed to provide a safe place. In reality, it was anything but.

Karter was abused and had severe burns on his arms from being placed in scalding water. He was shaken to the point that he had a stroke, which caused a serious brain injury. As a result, he can no longer talk, walk, control his movements, eat or see.

Although this precious boy started his life in a very dark place and will likely never see again, he finally has light in his life. After being placed in our Therapeutic Foster Care with Enhanced Services program because of his medical needs, Karter lives with foster parents who have cared for and adopted another child with Shaken Baby Syndrome. They have opened their hearts to Karter, as well.

In addition to seeing a team of doctors regularly, Karter receives physical and occupational therapy. He can stand for a few minutes at a time with the help of a specialized device to support him, and he is beginning to sit up on his own. His burns have healed following skin grafts, and his emotional scars are healing, as well.

Although Karter startles easily, he immediately calms down when he hears the voices of his foster parents, who meet his every need and refuse to leave his side whenever he's in the hospital. For the first time, Karter can trust those who promise to keep him safe.

That's why we are so incredibly grateful to the foster parents and families who serve our foster children. Any kind of fostering requires love, empathy, perseverance and sacrifice, but providing the intensive care a child with special needs requires takes an even greater level of commitment.

Kids in Therapeutic Foster Care with Enhanced Services have specific medical, physical or other needs which require additional training and support for the child and family caring for the child. There are countless doctor visits, hospital stays, as well as therapy and counseling sessions, and meetings with school officials.

KARTER'S STORY CONTINUED

THERAPUETIC FOSTER CARE

But time and again, God has provided just the right people who are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that His children are loved, protected, nurtured and equipped to reach their full potential.

Karter's journey will never be easy. He will most likely be on a feeding tube and be non-verbal for the rest of his life. But he will know, thanks to Embrace Florida Kids, that love truly is the greatest of all things. And as 1 Corinthians 13:7 reminds us, love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."



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JEREMY'S STORY

THERAPUETIC FOSTER CARE

Jeremy was 7 when the physical and sexual abuse started. By the time he was 12, he'd bounced from foster home to foster home a dozen times. It's no surprise he showed signs of being suicidal, and he had a history of mood swings, impulsive and destructive actions, and aggression toward his peers. Because of all he'd endured and the struggle to cope with it, he wet the bed and suffered from depression. Jeremy was diagnosed with a speech disorder and intellectual disabilities that were likely impacted by the childhood trauma he experienced. His future seemed as frightening as his past.

Then he was placed in the care of Embrace Florida Kids and everything changed for the better. The ministry's Therapeutic Foster Care staff took great care in selecting Jeremy's foster father because they wanted to ensure they set him up for success and not just another failed placement.

Their prayers were answered. Not only did his foster father love and care for Jeremy, he adopted him a few years later. Thanks to Embrace Florida Kids' ministry, Jeremy has learned what "family" really means.

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Kids in Therapeutic Foster Care may have physical or intellectual disabilities, social maladjustment, or emotional and behavioral issues. There are countless doctor visits, hospital stays, as well as therapy and counseling sessions, and meetings with school officials.

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JEREMY'S STORY CONTINUED

THERAPUETIC FOSTER CARE

Jeremy continues to receive counseling and psychiatric services, as well as school enrichment. He participates in therapeutic recreation activities and has discovered pursuits he enjoys that build his confidence. Other programs have helped him learn to interact appropriately with his peers. Although he continues to have significant special needs, Jeremy now has a loving father, a sense of community and a dedicated team that has his best interests at heart.

Embrace Florida Kids' involvement did not stop with Jeremy's adoption. We continue to support our adoptive families for as long as they need our help. We provide emotional, educational and financial assistance, which may mean covering dental and medical expenses. For other families, it could be providing gifts and meals at Christmas or attending school meetings to help advocate for the child.

Our team does whatever it takes to help provide homes, healing and hope to vulnerable children and families. Because "Embrace Florida Kids" is not only our name, it's our mission.



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HALEY'S STORY

MILTON GIRLS HOME

Haley was a young girl who came to the Milton Girls Home when it was revealed that she had been left in the care of a man abusing her sexually, physically and emotionally. She was reluctant to speak or make eye contact, isolating herself from others. When she noticed a staff member's foot was in a cast, she remarked, "Nobody ever took me to the doctor when they broke my bones."

The Milton Girls Home, one of the many life-changing programs of Embrace Florida Kids, provides a safe and stable home where teen girls who have experienced significant life challenges receive mentoring, academic accountability and spiritual care. Through the loving efforts of qualified caregivers, these girls can be transformed into the amazing, self-reliant, competent women God created them to be.

"While Haley was with us, we witnessed her blossom into a confident young woman who welcomed self-discovery and authenticity," said Chelsea, a youth care worker at the home. "Her personality, confidence and trust grew exponentially." Because staff members create an individualized plan of care for each resident, Haley received targeted nurturing activities, which in her case included equine therapy and special education classes, while living in a safe home where she could study, play and grow in comfort and security.

Because Embrace values families, Haley was able to visit and connect with a family member who eventually adopted her. She has learned to drive, is pursuing her GED with aspirations of joining the military, and maintains a job while living independently with a roommate.

"With the consistency, stability and nurturing that she needed, Haley has built and sustained trusting relationships that continue to guide her into adulthood," Chelsea said. "She continues to discover who she is as she strives to achieve her own version of success."

Restoration results from a sustained loving effort, often requiring the skills and patience of many caring individuals. Haley's sense of self has, in fact, lovingly been restored.



THE TURNER'S STORY

FAMILY PRESERVATION

When David and Janelle Turner went to court in hopes of getting custody of their grandchildren who had been placed in foster care, the judge asked one important question: "Exactly how large is your heart?" Mrs. Turner thought a moment before answering.

"It's big enough for these two," she said. "I realized you don't actually have to birth a child to love them. I'm a very tenderhearted, loving person, and I have a lot to offer."

The children, ages 4 and 2, will need plenty of love and stability going forward. Their parents lost custody due to excessive drug use, neglect and family conflict. The children were in foster care for eight weeks, but the Embrace staff helped the Turners with the reunification process and have provided a variety of supportive services.

Family Preservation is an intensive in-home intervention program. For a period of up to nine months, Embrace's skilled and highly qualified staff works to alleviate conditions within homes at risk of having children removed. The program also supports children who have been removed from their homes. The goal is to preserve and reunify families while ensuring the safety of children. Embrace helps families learn new skills that bring about restoration and prevent the need for a child's re-entry into foster care.

"I feel like right now we are in a much better place because of Embrace," Mrs. Turner said. "I'm taking everything they offer to help our family." The children's parents have left the home, and Embrace helped the Turners with parenting and discipline techniques. They've established a reward system for the children to encourage good behavior and have worked together to ensure that the home is safe and in good repair. The staff helped arrange for day care and speech therapy for the children, as well as weekly counseling for the family.

"The things that were causing us heartache are no longer here," Mrs. Turner said. "It's no longer about us; it's about the children."

The Turners have met each requirement and are helping the children learn life skills, such as dressing themselves. They have also been diligent in ensuring that the oldest child, who has some health issues, gets the medical care he needs. "To me, a family is a whole unit working together to overcome anything that is thrown at them," Mrs. Turner said. "We're working together as a family. A lot of things are changing, but they're changing in a positive way."