Imagine a child. Her parents lost to addiction or violence. Maybe dad was abusive, as his father was to him. The police come. Now the child lives with strangers. These new parents are nice, but the child doesn’t know what to do with nice. So she acts out, gets in trouble. She is moved. Now there are new parents. Then maybe more new parents. Now the child is a teenager. No one talks about adoption anymore. Now they’re talking about independence. Someone asks what the child will do when she’s ‘on her own.’

To which the child could credibly reply, “I already am.”

No more. Though our community’s most vulnerable children face abuse, neglect, raging heroin and meth epidemics, and a child welfare system that simply cannot keep up, they have an important ally against the odds.

They have you.

By supporting the Coalition in 2017, you joined a movement to radically alter the way children experience foster care. As you’ll see in this year’s annual report, we’ve made incredible strides. Take pride in these accomplishments. They are equally yours.

And after reflecting on all we’ve achieved, imagine that child again.

Her story isn’t over. There’s still time. Let’s finish it together.

With gratitude,

John Phillips
President, Board of Directors
A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Tony and I became foster parents in South Carolina in 2002. Since then, we've adopted 10 children through foster care. Back in November, we adopted Hannah and Zachariah, two siblings from St. Louis who we found out about through the Coalition's Extreme Recruiter, Angela Chewe.

We knew they were our kids the moment we met them. Hannah is very animated and creative, but it's easy to misunderstand her behavior. She has a strong imagination. It just needs a little positive direction. Zachariah hadn't had a male role model in his life, ever. He was sort of in awe of Tony when we met them.

They were both nervous, sitting across the table at the restaurant. They were worried they'd "mess up." They thought we'd decide we didn't want them. We made it clear they couldn't mess up when it came to us, and soon Hannah was talking. She told us that they felt like the musical "Annie," that it had been a "hard-knock life." She actually said that! I loved it. Pretty soon she leaned over to Zachariah and said, "See, I told you they'd like us."

Tony and I have a simple rule – when we commit to children, that's it. It wasn't long after that first visit that Zachariah and Hannah came to South Carolina to live with us.

Hannah and Zachariah are so different from the day we met them. They make straight A's, they're both on the honor-roll. They love to fish. They love having siblings. Zachariah wants to do everything with his brothers and his dad. Years ago we bought a farm because we felt nature was a healing resource for the children in our home. It was a salve on their trauma beyond our love. That's been true for these two kids. They can explore and grow and heal. They eat healthy. We describe it as "fun chaos."

Tony likes to say it's not easy, that you have to think of these kids as diamonds in the rough – they don't come shiny and perfect. We rely on patience and prayer, and on each other. We also like to say you can't make kids fit inside a box – we like to meet them where they are. Focus on their strengths. Let them find out what they're good at. They're often good at so much.