



## **Kids These Days: The Gift of Good News**

By Dr. David Rideout

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. What does that look like to you?

For me, it brings up many fond memories of Christmases past. When I was a child in our small outport village in Newfoundland, Christmas meant searching in the nearby woods for that elusive, perfectly-shaped evergreen that would meet my mother's high standards. It meant studying the Christmas catalogue for gifts to give (and marking the ones I hoped to receive). And it meant carrying out an old Newfoundlander Christmas tradition called "mumming"—dressing up in old-fashioned disguises and going door-to-door at night.

For us in Children's Services, Christmas came a little early this year when we were able to reconnect with some of the children who once upon a time had been in our care. These were children who lived with foster families, with kinship caregivers, or in group homes. These children are grownups now—gone from our system, but not forgotten.

We invited them to share their stories publicly, which they did with unabashed honesty. They told us all about where life had taken them, what they had learned, how they had fared since becoming independent adults. It seems fitting to share their stories with you now, because they are a gift we want to pass along. Their experiences are a testament to the strength that comes from adversity; a reminder that every child has promise.

Brian came into care when he was only seven years old. His foster mom described him as "the angriest little boy you've ever met." Thanks to the compassion of his foster parents and the kindness of two high school teachers, Brian's life changed immeasurably. His teacher, Mr. Sekyer, encouraged him to use the same discipline he applied to sports to his studies. Brian's social studies mark went from 53 percent to 89 percent. His football coach taught him to set goals, which Brian did—achieving not one but three journeyman certificates. And foster parents who think of Brian as their own son gave Brian the family life he so needed and deserved. You can watch Brian's story [here](#).

Yvonne was a little girl at extreme risk, often found alone late at night in the playground when she was just four years old. After being seriously injured in a family violence incident, she was taken into the foster home of Joyce and Brian Golding. She learned to ride and care for a horse, and in doing so, gained confidence in herself. When she grew up, Yvonne vowed to "pay forward" the love and compassion she experienced. She now works at a group home for troubled youth, with whom she has a special connection born of shared experience. See Yvonne's story [here](#).

Those are just two stories in a series of "good news" videos we produced, entitled "How Far You've Come: Profiles of Former Children in Care." Their stories remind us that we all have a role in helping children reach their full potential. That with love and compassion, every child can be transformed. It's a story we never tire of hearing, like a gift that just keeps on giving, and we're pleased to share it with you. Merry Christmas.

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