

The Invisible Challenges of Autism

Miracle is a perfectly healthy 9-year-old girl. But because Miracle has autism, she has struggled with people not understanding the additional challenges she faces. For over a year, BFYFS staff have worked diligently in coordination with Miracle's teachers and caregivers, and finally, her needs are being met. Miracle's performance in school is improving, and she is enjoying social relationships for the first time.

Miracle's foster mother, Amy, is petitioning the court for permanent guardianship of Miracle. She spoke with our Board recently to express her gratitude for the assistance and guidance of BFYFS staff in helping her understand Miracle's needs, and for providing a team of supporters to uplift Miracle.

From hospitalization to happiness

13-year-old Michael's self-harm became so serious, he had to be hospitalized. Michael's mother was absent, and his siblings, left to their own devices, had been abusing him. Bayfront Youth and Family Services began working with Michael and his whole family.

Within three months, Michael was released from the hospital into the care of a family member. He is no longer being abused, is no longer afraid, and is no longer harming himself.

BFYFS worked with the whole family, to provide healing and hope, and uplifting the whole family uplifted Michael. His grandmother said that the hospitalization was a horrible experience for Michael and BFYFS support with the legal systems was critical to his release. "BFYFS is always there when I need them, no matter the hour or the issue. They care for the entire family and the caregiver. It is not Michael's job to make his world safe, he's only a child."

Family Strengthened and Reunited

After years of neglect, abuse, and incredible stress, siblings Andrew (18), Tommy (10), and Amber (7) were separated into different foster homes. BYFS held the family's hand through many cycles of deep, intense therapy, and worked with the entire family, teaching parenting skills, and breaking patterns of bad behavior. Joan (Grandmother) said the thing she appreciated most was knowing she was not alone in the struggle. "7x24, I can call BFYFS, and they never gave up on us. We're back together as a family thanks to their caring and expertise."

Overcoming Learning Disabilities

Adrian, a 14-year-old boy, has learning disabilities and was struggling in school, falling behind others in his grade level. He and his foster mother, Milly, have been under the support of BFYFS for a year.

Milly said, "BFYFS has been a blessing. They provide a stable environment for tutoring and support to work beyond established patterns to achieve outstanding results. Adrian has learned how to be better in school, and at home through the deep connection your staff has established and maintained with both of us."

Adrian is now back at grade level and thriving.

Overcoming the Trauma of a School Shooting

Bayfront Youth and Family Services is in contract with several schools to provide youth development services. In 2018, a 9th grader was shot and killed at one of these schools.

There is no way to describe the depth of trauma faced by the students and staff when this happened.

BFYFS immediately responded with trained trauma experts who came to the school to assist the entire student body and staff in somehow dealing with the fear, sadness, and grief of their experience.

We then engaged one on one with those who witnessed the tragic event, in school and at home, to help them process their complex emotional trauma. Five years later, we are still engaged with the survivors on their journey to recovery.

Returning to a Healthy Family

Claudia and Aquisha fought for 4 years to get their two sons (ages 11 & 18) out of foster care and back home. They found Bayfront Youth and Family Services, and are grateful for the support in navigating the system.

"When it's too much to handle, we can call BFYFS and they know who we are and what we need. We're able to work with the same team of therapists. It's not like working with the many social worker strangers, they are family to us. They treat us with respect. They are flexible and provide an organized response, and follow through on their commitments to us. BFYFS has taught us how to raise a healthy family while lifting us up as individuals."