MICHELLE & NATHAN'S STORY

Michelle and Nathan came into the foster care system in July of 2003. Michelle was almost 2 years old and Nathan was about 6 months old. Their mother, Jessica, was living in a car and voluntarily placed the children in care. Our agency does not do voluntary placement agreements so a CHIPS petition was filed, and they were formally placed in a foster home through the Court. Our agency anticipated this would be a short placement as we assisted Jessica to find housing and employment. Unfortunately, it did not end up that way as she refused the found housing due to the distance from her mother, and she refused the employment because she didn't want to put her children in daycare. The children's fathers were located, but neither they nor any relatives were appropriate for placement.

Michelle and Nathan stayed at the foster home for about a year and a half as our agency worked to reunite them with a relative or parents. In the meantime, their mother moved two hours away and had another child. Visitation was sporadic and their foster parents were the only "regulars" in their lives. They call the foster parents "mom and dad" and they also call Jessica mom. At one point in 2004, they were removed from the foster home due to allegations of abuse by the foster parents. They were returned to the home after a couple of weeks when the allegations were unfounded. In spring 2005, a termination of parental rights petition was filed. By this time the children hadn't visited any of their biological parents in months.

Michelle and Nathan's mother voluntarily signed away their rights and the father's rights were terminated by default, as he didn't show up for the hearing. After the court hearing, biological mother gave the foster family a family book to share with the children when they are older. The foster family is in the process of adopting the children and has had Michelle and Nathan's mother over to their house to visit and will continue to have an open relationship with the biological family.