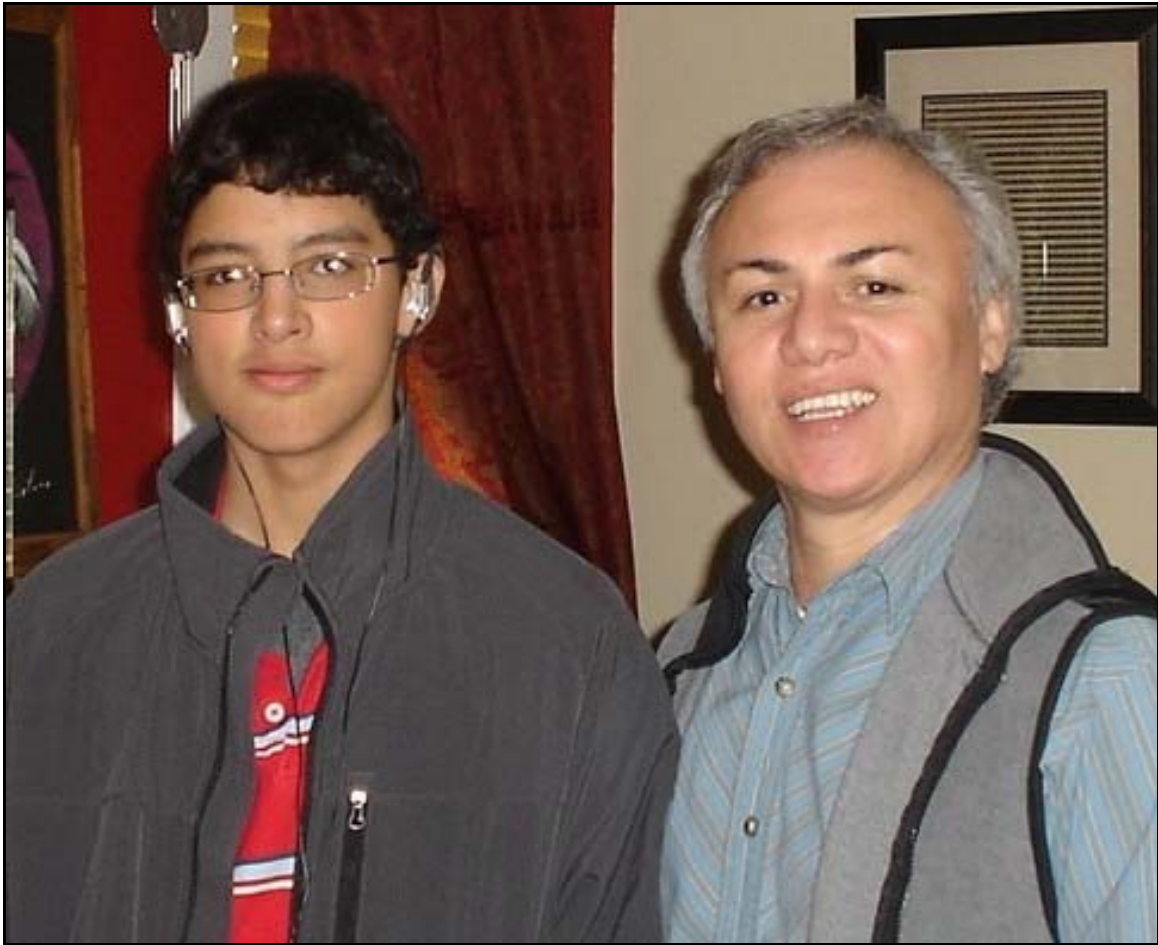


An Immediate Bond Growing Stronger With Time

By Lisa Flower



Jose and Amaury

It did not take long for Amaury to know there would be a special bond between him and the little boy he would adopt.

The first time Amaury met José, the three-year-old boy was at a medical appointment at Hartford Hospital. José, who never previously met the man who would later become his father, immediately grabbed Amaury's hand and did not let go. "José came straight over to me, put his little hand in mine, and kept holding my hand throughout the entire visit," said Amaury. That was the beginning of their wonderful life together.

In 1995, Amaury began working for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at the Connecticut Children's Place (CCP) in East Windsor. Learning about the children at CCP inspired him to pursue adoption. Amaury says the management and staff at CCP were extremely supportive of him adopting a child from foster care throughout the entire adoption process. Amaury is also grateful to the social workers involved in Jose's case.

Amaury began taking the classes required to become licensed to adopt, and shortly after being licensed, he received a phone call from a DCF social worker. He was told that he was among four families selected for consideration for caring for José. Early in April 1999, he got a phone call that he was selected as the adoptive parent for José.

The plan was to move José quickly from his foster home due to his young age and the need to move him from his current foster home. José had a routine medical appointment on April 23, 1999, and it seemed like a perfect

chance for the boy and his future Dad to meet. When Amaury arrived at Hartford Hospital, José was holding hands with his social worker. When Amaury and the boy met, it was clear from the start they were meant to be.

After the visit, Amaury returned home only to get a phone call from the Department saying that things went so well that José would be placed with him that afternoon. Maybe it was just good luck that Amaury had Jose's room ready even before they met. Within a few hours, José would arrive in his new home.

This was a "legal risk placement" because the biological parents still had parental rights at the time, which meant that José still had contact with his birth family. He visited weekly, and parental rights were eventually terminated. He was legally adopted on December 19, 2002. José still has occasional contact throughout the year with his mother -- which José values.

José, now an eighth-grader, and Amaury's relationship continues to flourish. They have vacationed in Puerto Rico, Cape Cod, and Florida and are involved in community programs. Amaury and José have also worked hard to make sure José participates in a wide variety of pursuits, including the arts and education. José has been involved in the theater, sports, was an honor student at Smalley Academy, and is a member of Junior Achievement.

José was very proud when he won 6th place in the statewide poster competition for "Say No To Drugs" hosted by the Elks Club and the school system. He is also extremely creative and won 1st place in the Invention Convention at Smalley Academy. He invented the "Ready Pouch" which was a small bag with different pockets used to store school supplies. The small bag was intended to be hung on the desk handle with José having the idea that children would not have to get up and disrupt the class by going to their cubbies in order to get supplies. After winning at Smalley in fifth grade, José went on to the statewide competition at UCONN. He recalls this being an incredible experience as he was able to view all of the different inventions developed statewide.

José and Amaury are committed to raising their voices when they believe in a cause. José recently attended a hearing at the Legislative Office Building in order to testify about an after school program where funding was going to be reduced. Together, José and Amaury felt that this program was integral to the well being of families that needed the assistance for their children after school. José recalls, "My dad likes the program because he knows that after school I was safe and not getting into trouble or doing things that I was not supposed to do."

As a family, José and Amaury are very involved in the YMCA. José attends the YSUP program, "Youth Succeeding Under Pressure." He prides himself on not succumbing to peer pressure or using drugs or alcohol. In the spring Amaury was presented the YMCA's "Building Strong Families Award", in which Governor M. Jodi Rell was the key-note speaker.

During the summer, José attends the Central Connecticut State University ConnCap program. Youth are chosen for this program due to their excellence in the classroom. The six-week program is a college preparatory program for 7th and 8th grade students. They learn study skills, strategies on how to improve grades and information to help prepare them for college. José 's future is bright.

Amaury and José have built a special bond evident to all who know them. As their achievements and life experiences continue to grow, Amaury and José are united around a powerful zeal for accomplishment.

"You never know when the best is the best," Amaury said. "So, you keep making your life and your child's life better and better."