



Update . . .

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What Good is a Divorced Dad?

by R. David Weisskopf

Ariel and Gabriel were brothers who never knew their biological father. Their names are fictional - unfortunately their story is quite real. Their mother's drug addiction became so severe that she could no longer care for them. I met these brothers less than two months after the court took custody of them.

Ariel was the older of the two. He was bright and outgoing - a real leader. Ariel wanted to be a physical therapist. Gabriel, the younger, was scared and confused. Whatever traumas they had experienced in their young lives were beyond Gabriel's ability to express. Despite being nearly illiterate, both boys were very intelligent.

For every available bed in foster homes at the time, there were ten children like Ariel and Gabriel. Boys their ages were the least likely to get placed with families. Their caseworker was very fortunate to find a home for Gabriel with a divorced

father. Ariel had to be placed in a shelter for abused and neglected children.

The trauma of losing his brother was a huge setback for Gabriel. However, his foster father had training and experience in child welfare. This man devoted himself full-time to the children in his home – though he was a divorcee. He patiently helped Gabriel open up and cope with his situation. Over the course of a year, Gabriel was gradually learning to read and write.

Within three months of placement in the shelter, Ariel ran away. He joined a street gang. Within a year he was in prison.

The news of his brother's imprisonment was another big setback for Gabriel. He nearly lost everything he gained during his first year in that divorced dad's home. The foster father, though, was determined not to give up on Gabriel. Over the course of his second year in the foster home, Gabriel nearly caught up with his classmates.

Years later I met up with Gabriel, who is now a police officer in the drugs and gangs unit – and himself a father of two. His brother now serves a life sentence in prison with no hope of becoming a physical therapist.

I sometimes wonder what kind of physical therapist Ariel would have made if given a fair chance in life. Gabriel's community now has an excellent police officer because somebody took the time and patience to give him a second chance.

Gabriel's story illustrates the need of at-risk kids for positive role models – even divorced ones. Each child in your

community deserves a fair chance in life. You may be the role model who makes a big difference for an at-risk kid in your community.

Our Family Treatment Center proposal is available online at:

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