



Martin Gill and His Family

Martin Gill and his partner of more than eight years have been raising two foster children of the state since December 11, 2004. The children are now four and eight. Although the couple had fostered several children in past, when they received a call from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) asking if they would take care of two brothers – a newborn and a four-year old -- the couple initially said no because they were planning to move to Georgia. But after the DCF worker assured them that the placement would only be temporary, Martin and his partner agreed, knowing that they could provide the children with a special Christmas.

When they arrived in the home, both boys had bald patches on their heads from ringworm. The younger one was in pain, suffering from a severe ear infection which had not been treated. The older boy looked traumatized and depressed from having been taken from family. It took him several weeks before he began to speak and even then it was incomprehensible for some time.

Over time it became clear that the children would not be returned to their biological relatives, and in 2006, a judge terminated the parental rights of the biological parents. Meanwhile, the children have thrived in their new home and are closely bonded to their foster parents and their other brother. (Martin's partner has a 13-year-old biological son who the two men are also raising.)

The older boy went from being so depressed that he wouldn't even smile for a photograph to being a talkative kid who always has a grin on his face. Both have lots of friends in their North Miami neighborhood and both are doing well in school. The older boy started out behind educationally and had to repeat the first grade, but with the couple's help, he has progressed significantly.

Although the newborn bonded with the couple almost immediately, it took the older boy two and a half years to adjust to the loss of his biological family and bond to Martin and his partner. Now he won't leave the house without giving his Daddy and his Papi a hug. The children have also bonded with the couple's extended family, which includes two doting grandmothers.

A psychologist who evaluated the boys recommended that it would be in the boys' best interest to be adopted by Martin, testifying that it would be devastating for the boys to remove them from the home.

Martin and his partner have built their lives around their three children. They both work in the travel industry and are fortunate to be able to arrange their schedules so that at least one of them is always at home for the children. A large map in the boys' room is dotted with stars indicating all the places the family has visited. In addition to traveling, they spend a lot of time on the beach and feeding the animals in a nearby park. Everyone in the family loves animals, especially the boys who help to look after the family's dog, rabbit and cat.