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Pro Bono Success Stories

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In December 2014, Zach James accepted a pro bono case through Dade Legal Aid's Put Something Back program to serve as 15-year-old Jake's Attorney ad Litem. Jake grew up in a home where he was witness to drug use and violence and subject to significant neglect. Following the termination of Jake's parents' parental rights, Jake moved into his maternal aunt's home. But despite his wish to remain with his aunt permanently, in November 2014 he was removed from his aunt's home and placed in temporary foster-care.

It was Jake's desire to return back to his aunt and pursue adoption; however, the Guardian ad Litem, the Center for Family and Child Enrichment, and the Department of Children and Families opposed the adoption and supported Jake's removal from his aunt. Based on the conflict between the government's position and Jake's wishes, Zach stepped in to represent Jake.

Zach James is a trial attorney with extensive litigation experience. A former state and federal prosecutor, Zach now concentrates his practice on business litigation, commercial bankruptcy, and matters involving financial fraud.

Zach negotiated and received Court-approval of a case plan for Jake's aunt, setting forth various tasks for her to complete to establish that it was in Jake's best interest to be returned to his aunt's custody. After Jake's aunt completed her tasks and Zach secured visitation between Jake and his aunt, Zach filed a motion to allow Jake to move back to his aunt's house permanently.

Due to the government's opposition, the matter proceeded to trial. Following a lengthy and contested evidentiary hearing involving several days of testimony, including numerous experts and fact witnesses, the Court granted the motion and permitted Jake to move back in with his aunt. Jake has been thrilled to be able to be reunified with his aunt, who has filed and is pursuing an adoption application for Jake.

Zach devoted more than 100 hours of time on this case, and in the process formed a

wonderful relationship with Jake, who Zach describes as a remarkable young man. Zach remains on the case to ensure that Jake's transition back to his aunt's home goes smoothly, and to ensure that Jake's voice is always heard.

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