

Finding Independence - Foster Youth in Transition

Connor's Story



Connor, a self-described “redneck from Mendocino County,” is a recent participant in Hanna Center’s new residential Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program, which launched in April of 2023. Connor graduated high school early in March of 2023 and was living in a group home when his social worker referred him to the program.

Despite numerous moves during his childhood and being bounced among various schools and residential programs, Connor made straight A’s in his junior year. “I would have done the same my senior year,” he says, “but I lost my motivation to do really well.”

The residential program that Connor is enrolled in at Hanna is for individuals aged 18-21 who have chosen to extend their placement in foster care as non-minor dependents. The program is centered around an Independent Living Plan that includes career guidance, opportunities to further their education, and medical and mental health services.

At 18, Connor has experienced much adversity in his life, starting from a very early age. His biological father didn’t know he even existed until he was two years old; his dad then went through a lengthy court battle to win custody of his son. The two were very close; Connor became his dad’s drinking buddy at age nine, and they often played dangerous games, “dodging death, just for fun, like getting drunk and playing cornhole with firecrackers.”

Before his father won custody at age four, Connor lived at home with his mom, three younger brothers, and his mom’s boyfriend. The boyfriend molested Connor and his two-year old brother. Today, he’s in jail for child pornography. At the age of ten, Connor’s father died by suicide.

An extremely intelligent young man, Connor grapples with self-motivation. His dream is to own and operate an arcade. He enjoys studying the games to analyze how they work, especially enjoying the ‘Claw Machine’ and other crane-related machines. “I’m not essentially good at other prize redemption games,” he says, “but I know how they work.”

The TAY Program staff will be helping Connor enroll at Santa Rosa Junior College next semester to begin working towards his goal of earning a BA in business. In the meantime, the team is also helping Connor secure a part-time job and possibly work with the Department of Rehabilitation.

“We are helping Connor with independent living skills, like cooking, household budgeting, maintaining a personal and hygienic living environment, applying for jobs and enrolling in classes, scheduling medical appointments, etc.,” says Peter Tripp, Transitional Housing Program Coordinator.

Living quarters for both programs are supervised and safe, providing a supportive environment for youth who are ready for more self-sufficiency and independence. Participants can enter directly from a family-based foster care setting, probation, or congregate care. *Learn more at hannacenter.org.*