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Contact: Jessica Arguijo
Communications Manager
Jessica.Arguijo@txcourts.gov
(512) 463-7226

Supreme Court Children's Commission recognizes foster care success story

AUSTIN – The Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission convened today for the first of its meetings of 2016 and recognized a 13-year-old-former foster youth named Rafael who told of his journey through foster care. Rafael was joined by Judge Rob Hofmann, Children's Commission Vice Chair and the judge who oversaw his case, and his adoptive parents, CPS caseworker, therapist, and nurse, who worked together to set an example of how the foster care system should care for each child.

At the age of 10, Rafael weighed over 365 pounds and was taken into foster care due to neglect. CPS initially placed Rafael in a hospital where he received strict diet and exercise instructions. In need of a foster home, his aunt and uncle came forward and requested that they be allowed to care for Rafael and help him on his journey to a healthier and safer lifestyle. Over the next 24 months and with the support of his aunt and uncle, Rafael lost almost 225 pounds. Thanks to a persistent district judge, Rafael underwent surgery to re-contour his young body which was greatly affected by his dramatic weight loss. In December 2015, Rafael's aunt and uncle adopted him and he has found his forever home.

"Rafael took control of his own destiny. He had an amazing team to support him, but ultimately he had to decide to save his own life. And he did," said Judge Hofmann. "I am so thankful that we were able to recognize the accomplishments of this amazing young man and the people who went above-and-beyond to help in his success."

"Rafael is an extraordinary example of perseverance and persistence in the face of daunting obstacles," said the Honorable Eva Guzman, Supreme Court Justice and Chair of the Children's Commission. "His success is a testament to a support system committed to his welfare and best interests. As this story demonstrates, judges who are invested in our children play a critical role in achieving positive outcomes. Insights and perspectives gained through deep connections can be life transforming."

At the meeting, Rafael and his team of support addressed the Children's Commission where his state representative, Rep. Andrew Murr, presented him with a Texas flag flown in his honor. Justice Eva Guzman was joined by Justice Jeff Brown and presented to Rafael a gavel to symbolize the earnest commitment of the State of Texas to support his journey to permanency.

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