

## **Today's Foster Youth Will Not Be Tomorrow's Homeless Adults**

**By Christopher Patterson**

Each year, more than 20,000 youth age out of foster care. According to the [National Center for Housing and Child Welfare](#), 25% or 1 in 4 of them will endure homelessness within four years. That's unacceptable. These young people are our future!

After birth I was placed into foster care and was later adopted at 5 years old. At 12 years of age, I returned into foster care due to the abuse and neglect meted out by my adoptive family. After several more placements, I eventually found the foster parents that I would come to know as Mom and Dad. They lived on a farm with their two biological children and a few of us foster kids. As an adolescent, I joined [Job Corps](#) before working my way through college. I have been personally and professionally committed to serving foster kids ever since.

Throughout my career, I've worked on some of the most challenging cases one could imagine, and, in hindsight, I was very lucky to live with my foster family in a safe and stable environment. Unlike many in foster care, I was also fortunate to have the loving support I needed to guide me through the toughest years of my life. With a roof over my head, a job, and stability in my life, I was able to achieve my dreams. Every kid should be given this opportunity.

Last year, Secretary Carson directed the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#) to deepen its commitment to combatting homelessness among foster youth. HUD launched a first-of-its-kind effort, "Foster Youth to Independence" (FYI) to house those aging out or already homeless. This program provides housing vouchers to eligible foster kids, along with the foundation on which they can build their futures. With a roof over their head, they are then afforded the opportunity all adolescents have, to pursue a job or finish their schooling.

Thankfully, HUD is not alone in this effort. Housing authorities must work with child welfare agencies to identify eligible youth. I know first-hand the importance of this effort at a time when so many need a stable home. For too long, foster youth have been cast into the shadows of our homelessness epidemic. Thanks to HUD's Foster Youth to Independence, that's no longer the case.

*Christopher Patterson is Regional Administrator for HUD's Pacific Region and Secretary Ben Carson's National Lead for the Department's Foster Youth to Independence Initiative.*