



The Mullinax family celebrates the adoption of John and Sam. Left to right: Judge Joseph W. McGowan II, John Small-Mullinax, Laurie Mullinax, Alan Mullinax, Sam Mullinax, Sam Creech-Mullinax, and adoption worker Joan McFadden.

'why don't you adopt us?'

After spending years in foster care, South Carolina brothers find 'the right family'

Sam and John, who are half brothers, were living at the Windwood Farm Home for Children outside of Mt. Pleasant, S.C., when Laurie and Alan Mullinax met them. The couple had been foster parents before, and they felt a connection to the boys. They agreed to foster them until someone adopted them.

When an adoption placement was made, Laurie wasn't confident about it, so before

Sam and John left she told them that they could always return if things didn't work out. The adoption fell through in about a month, and Sam and John – by then in the sixth grade and ninth grade – returned to Laurie and Alan in foster care.

"Why don't you adopt us?" John would sometimes ask his foster parents.

It took a while, but one day, Laurie and Alan were ready.

"God put it on our hearts that we should adopt them," Laurie said.

They began the paperwork, and the process took more than a year. By the time all the red tape had been cleared and the adoption was finalized on Oct. 18, John was 18 – an adult. He is now Samuel Creech-Mullinax, and his brother is John

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Small-Mullinax.

Laurie says she's blessed to have had the opportunity to adopt the boys.

"I never would have thought that at the age of 63 I would be becoming a mother," she says.

Despite the challenges they've had over the years, Sam and John have "turned into really great young men," Laurie says. John is now at Trident Tech and has a part-time job. Sam is in 9th grade at the Charleston Charter School for Math and Science.

After living with five or six different foster families and in a group home since the age of 5, Sam is happy to have a permanent home. For him, it's all about "just having the right family," and he describes his parents as "loving and caring." He's happy to no longer have to switch from home to home.

"Life now is onward," he says. "I'm not looking back anymore. I'm looking at the possibilities now."

in the news

Dakins wins Chamber award

Teresa Smith Dakins received the Paul E. Fisher Volunteer of the Year award from the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce at the organization's 91st annual gala. Dakins volunteers tirelessly for the chamber while continuing to do a wonderful job as community outreach coordinator for LSC's Trinity at Home and Trinity Living Center.



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People don't understand what a refugee is. A refugee is a person who has had to leave his or her home country out of fear of death or persecution, usually for religious or political reasons. These people are running for their lives from ISIS, the Taliban, dictators, etc., and running toward safety and freedom – America! Refugees are entrepreneurial and resourceful, or they might not be alive. They thrive in freedom, becoming business owners, taxpayers, and contributors to the richness of our communities, as they have been through LIRS for 75 years.

Are refugees really properly vetted?

This is one of the most misunderstood issues; they are properly vetted. Refugees are already vetted in over 10 different ways under the supervision of the United Na-

tions, the State Department, Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI. This vetting includes a retinal scan and an intense interview process designed to uncover lies or misinformation. The most critical vetting to me is that refugees have lived in a refugee camp for two or five or more years before getting the opportunity to come to the US. There are much easier ways to get into the country than as a refugee.

Do you have a favorite LSC refugee success story?

I don't have a favorite story, but I have been at the airport a few times when refugees are arriving. It is a life-changing experience. I can't imagine how anyone could see that and be opposed to welcoming refugees. As a matter of fact, LSC needs to find ways to bring that experience to everyone!

What role do churches play in LSC's refugee services program?

Churches can play a pivotal role in the long welcome by sponsoring a refugee family. If a church is not near a refugee site, they can co-sponsor with a closer church. Sponsoring churches can gather furniture, kitchen items, and food. They can help with rent, outfit the apartment, assist with transportation. They can befriend the family, help them practice English, and play with the children. They can be a good neighbor. And who wouldn't respond in like manner to a loving neighbor?

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Yes! I am saddened by the anti-Muslim demagoguery from a small but loud minority. Except for a small number of extremists, neither the Christian nor Muslim faiths condone killing. We must stamp out extremism on both sides to have peaceful conversation and to have peace.