

Operation Backpack: Two Brothers Find a Permanent Home

By [Angela Spears](#)
First Coast News

JACKSONVILLE, FL - Thousands of kids on the First Coast are in the foster care system. They have been taken from their homes because of domestic violence, drugs or abandonment. Family Support Services of North Florida works to get them back with their parents or in a stable, loving home.

Three brothers' lives changed drastically in a short amount of time. Now, family time has become a ritual for Michael, Matt and Mitchell. They were all once in foster care.

11-year-old Michael and 10-year-old Matt have a permanent home with Wayne Williams and his wife, Regina, who legally adopted them. According to Regina, "They've just grown and matured so much."

Mitchell, their 8-year-old brother, spends time with them often. However, he lives with his biological dad.

The boys smile a lot more now and they get to do some neat stuff. Matt says, "It's fun in this family and they do a lot of exciting things."

A day at the pool with mom is not out of the ordinary for them these days. According to Matt, "Swim... sometimes go out to eat, go to friends' houses, sometimes like Disney World." And he says they even get to travel out of the state sometimes.

Their parents feel the boys are more confident and more content with themselves. The boys say they feel safer.

Michael and Matt are having fun now. But over the past year, it hasn't always been easy. Matt says, "I was kind of sad because I couldn't see my mom."

Michael told First Coast News, "I really didn't like 'em back then, but then once I got to know them, I liked them."

They have learned a lot. For example, they know how to play board games. They know a few tricks in the water. They have even learned table manners. Mitchell now knows "if you chew with your mouth open, it can get people sick."

Most importantly, the boys say they have learned trust and what it's like to be there for each other.

Michael and Matt were officially adopted last month. They had been in foster care for a year. As stated before, Mitchell lives with his dad, but he had been in foster care from November 2005 until this past April. He visits his brothers and their new parents often.

If you'd like more information on how you can become a foster parent or how you can adopt a child, call (904)421-5800 or click on the link above.

Operation Backpack is tomorrow (September 1st) from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. You can drop off backpacks and gift cards at area K-mart stores. The backpacks go to kids when they first enter the system. The gift cards go to those already in the system.

This is the 9th Annual Operation Backpack. During that time, we have collected more than 10,000 backpacks. Last year, we collected more than 800 backpacks and more than \$10,000 in gift cards. We hope to collect even more this year.

Angela Spears will be live at the Kmart store at Beach and University Boulevard September 1st for Good Morning Jacksonville Saturday from 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

You can drop off backpacks and gift cards at any Kmart store or at the First Coast News Studios from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. For more information on Operation Backpack, click on the Operation Backpack icon on the home page.

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- [information on adoption and foster parenting](#)
- [Section: Operation Backpack](#)