

A Voice Revealed: A CASA Story 25 Years in the Making



Camie Flowers
and Pilar Hobbs

Born in 1973, Pilar was raised by parents who suffered from alcoholism and were abusive. They would leave Pilar and her young siblings alone to fend for themselves while they went out drinking. The children entered Child Protective Services and were split apart.

At age 5, Pilar was almost adopted by a family she loved, but health issues halted the process. She then ended up being adopted by another family who had also adopted her younger sister. The mother turned out to be abusive, hitting and beating the girls. The father began molesting Pilar.

For years, Pilar was scared to speak up, but at 16 she finally told a counselor: "I was really surprised that the school counselor listened to me. If I told my adoptive mom, she would never believe me."

Now in 1990, Pilar found herself back in the foster care system, but this time something had changed. CASA of Travis County had been founded in 1985 by a group of concerned citizens and judges.

Camie Flowers was appointed to Pilar and her sister: "I realized this was her second time in the foster care system. My heart just went out to the things that they had endured."

"I just was really happy that [Camie] was there to listen to me. That's all I wanted growing up, was someone to listen to me and be close to me," said Pilar.

Camie helped Pilar and her sister stay connected, driving across Central Texas so they could spend time together. She helped Pilar with jobs and transportation and guided her through everyday teenage troubles. Camie was there to see Pilar graduate from high school and help her move into her first apartment.

After Pilar turned 18, she kept in touch with Camie to check on her sister. "Having her in my life made me really focus on how to forgive people. I'm a strong person, and one reason is because of Camie," said Pilar.

Pilar has broken the cycle of abuse and neglect in her life. Pilar and her husband of 20 years, Derrick, are loving parents to their daughter Marcella, who is heading into her third year of college.

And Camie and Pilar have become lifelong friends.

Hear Pilar's story in her own words in a half-hour film, *A Voice Revealed*, which you can watch at: www.casatris.org/avoicerevealed

We would like to thank Epic Creative Media for the talent, hours and boundless creative energy they contributed to help us tell Pilar and Camie's story.

Our advocacy for Pilar continues today. Pilar always wondered about the family who had almost adopted her at age 5, particularly the father, Ben. We got the family's name and old address from Pilar's CPS files. Our Family Finding team was able to find Ben's updated contact information and Pilar called him.

"He said he never forgot about me. He still had my picture. I wanted to cry on the phone. It was so touching to hear his voice after so many years," said Pilar. Ben traveled to Austin and she emailed us after their visit: "This has always been what I wanted, to see this family again. Thanks to CASA for making it happen."

We are privileged and proud to know Pilar and Camie. We are grateful to Pilar for sharing her story to ensure other children do not face the challenges of the foster care system all alone like she did the first time. We wish for all the children we serve a life like the one Pilar has built.