


**APPLAUDS:**

# Lonnie Mims

## Speaker at Helping America's Youth Conference

TRAC is proud to spotlight Lonnie Mims, a long time TRAC member, who was invited to speak at the Helping America's Youth's Dallas regional conference. Subsequently, Lonnie was invited to The White House for a reception to celebrate the third anniversary of the Helping America's Youth (HAY) initiative led by Mrs. Laura Bush. HAY is a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the challenges facing today's youth, particularly at-risk boys, and to motivate caring adults to connect with youth. Lonnie was asked to share challenges he has faced in life and the impact that caring adults have had as he has moved through the foster care system and to life on his own. Lonnie is a resident of TRAC's transitional apartments on Gaston Avenue. He is in school at Eastfield College and has been employed with Bank of America for over a year.



An excerpt from Lonnie's speech on the value of an adult caring relationship:

*Well most of my life I've been separated from my family. I've been in and out of children's homes. My mother was always there for me - she would send letters or call me or sometimes come to visit me. The last home I was in had the biggest impact on me - not because of the program, but because of the people. There was this one lady named Ms. Betty. She was always there for me. Sometimes I wanted to call my mother and she let me use her cell phone just so I could talk to her. She even helped me with get ready and pay for my prom out of her own pocket. Ms. Betty was there for me no matter what. She introduced me into her family. She continues to help me so much that I am happy to say I love her.*

Lonnie credits the TRAC staff members as being mentors to him today, encouraging him and never giving up on him. He agrees that community volunteers can support and help youth make better choices that lead to healthier, more successful lives. TRAC offers a formal mentoring program to match TRAC members with caring community volunteers to support and facilitate the transition from foster care to adult living.

"Caring adults connecting with youth is vital in the lives of our nation's young people, particularly at-risk boys, in helping them become healthy and successful adults." - Laura Bush

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