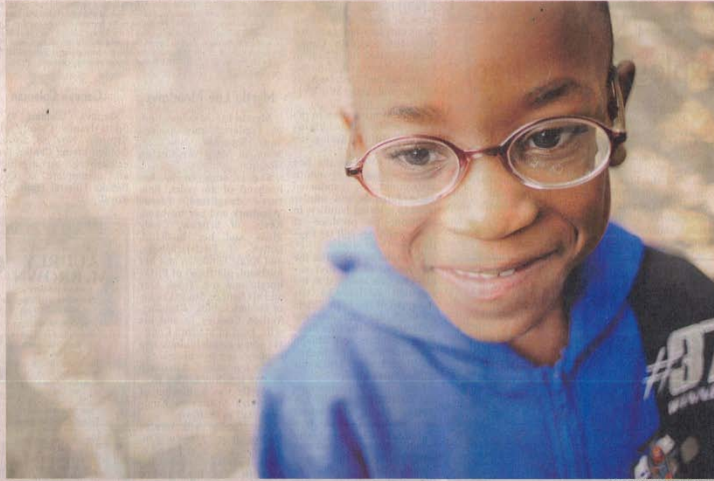


REGION

ADOPTION >> SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY NEEDS A FAMILY



At first glance, 6-year-old Malik comes across as shy, but he is a bundle of energy once he comes out of his shell.

DAVE ELLIS / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Malik is bright, energetic

ABOUT THE SERIES

On any given day, 1,500 Virginia children seek an adoptive family. The Free Lance-Star joined with the Children's Home Society of Virginia, a private adoption agency offering foster-care services, to spotlight some of these children. First names are used, but no last names are published to protect their identities. The newspaper will periodically feature a Virginia child available for adoption.

BY AMY FLOWERS UMBLE
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Malik starts off shy. The 6-year-old holds tight to his adoption worker, barely shakes his head to answer questions and hesitates to look at the animals on display at the Virginia Living Museum.

With some coaxing, he hesitantly reaches out a small, dark hand to touch the glass at the otter exhibit.

But within five minutes, Malik is comfortable and a completely

FOSTER CARE WORKERS KNOW THAT MALIK IS QUICKLY APPROACHING THE AGE AT WHICH IT WILL BE HARD TO FIND AN ADOPTIVE FAMILY.

different child.

Now, he bosses the small, playful animals around. "Get in the water, otter!" he

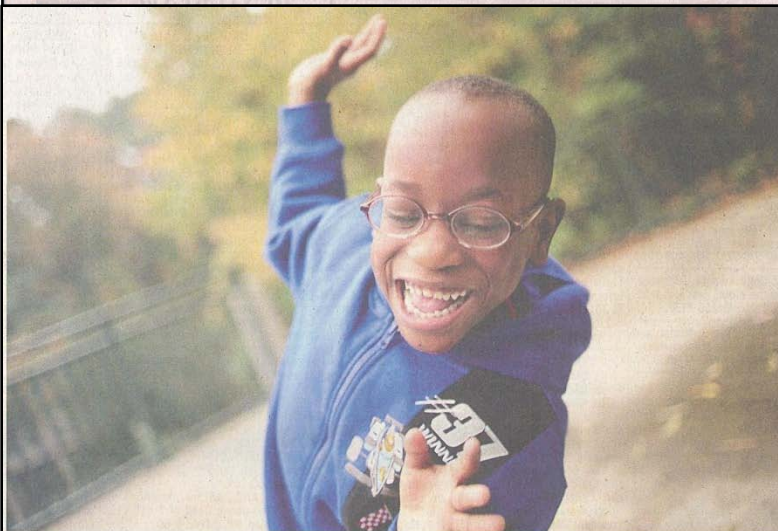
commands one animal that stops to take a break.

He runs around the exhibits and stops to check out a green house—a replica of an environmentally friendly home with a garden on its roof.

Malik has now become busy exploring the museum and still doesn't want to answer too many questions.

He loves kindergarten, he says. But he doesn't know why.

And he loves cars, trucks, **SEE ADOPTION, BACK PAGE**



DAVE ELLIS / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Malik is fortunate because he has lived with the same foster family since he was a toddler, but foster care officials want to find him a permanent home before he gets much older.

ADOPTION: Boy in foster care since he was a toddler

FROM PAGE C1

ambulances, any vehicle. Especially those that transform into robots.

Malik has been in foster care since he was a toddler, but he doesn't know it. The Virginia Beach kindergartner has been with the same foster family.

While the situation works well for Malik, it isn't permanent.

And foster care workers

WANT TO ADOPT?

Interested in adopting Malik or any of the other foster children waiting? Contact Krista McCul-

loch at Children's Home Society of Virginia at 800/247-2888 or 804/353-0191.

know that Malik is quickly approaching the age at which it will be hard to find an adoptive family.

So they're hoping to re-

cruit the ideal family for this bright and energetic little boy.

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