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How one Kansas City family is helping free the innocent and build a more just legal system in the Midwest

In 2019, after spending over 23 years in prison, Ricky Kidd's conviction was overturned, and he was released.

Ricky's release marked a monumental victory for the wrongly convicted. It was also a turning point in the life of Andrew Brain.

"One of the top three most impactful moments of my life was right after Ricky got out," says Andrew. "We were at an event – Ricky couldn't have been out of prison for more than about a week – and he said that if anyone donated \$500, he would go to The Nelson with them. That's The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art here in Kansas City. Ricky had never been, and he wanted to see it.

I hadn't been to The Nelson in forever, so I took him up on it. And that moment was the start of a beautiful friendship with Ricky. He and I really connected - I cried harder getting to know him than I had in a long, long time.

Meeting the people involved with Midwest Innocence Project, hearing their stories, getting to know them - that's what really changed the trajectory of my life."

Andrew's connection to Ricky ignited his passion for justice, and his family followed his lead. For nearly a decade, the Brain family has been part of MIP's fight to free the wrongfully convicted, providing not only financial support but also their time, skills, and community connections.

"It's not always bad cops or bad processes," Andrew reflects. "Sometimes, everyone has done their best, but their information is wrong because someone lied to them or covered something up. They're trying to do their job, but the system is run by humans, and mistakes get made.

People just get caught in the machine. They're facing this David and Goliath situation - the state with its nearly unlimited resources coming down on one person. David won against Goliath once in the Bible, but 99 times out of 100, David is gonna lose that fight. Goliath is the one with all the resources."

The Brain family has seen firsthand the life-changing impact of supporting MIP, and they encourage other families to join them in this important work. Their contributions have helped provide the staff and resources needed to prove innocence, while also supporting vital advocacy efforts, like pushing for Missouri to pass compensation laws for exonerees.

"97% of the time, the system gets it right," Andrew estimates. "But when you're talking about taking away the freedom of that 3% where we got it wrong - that's 100% of each of those people's lives. I can't stand that.

That's why organizations like MIP are so impactful. They give the Davids an equitable opportunity in an innately inequitable fight. When you donate to MIP, you're contributing to a night and day difference for someone. You're turning a potential lifetime in prison into a life of freedom.

It's such an incredible experience to be part of."

The Brain family's involvement is deeply personal and incredibly rewarding. Andrew and his family have never been content to let their support of MIP's clients end when the prison doors open. They provide rent-free housing, sometimes within their own homes, and help with transportation and job finding. They build lasting friendships with our clients, offering support and hope as they rebuild their lives.

Andrew believes our justice system is one of the best in the world, but he knows there's more work to be done. *"The work that MIP does pushes it to live up to its promise, to work toward 100% accuracy. Because it matters to be 100% accurate when we're talking about someone's freedom, someone's rights, someone's life.*

*We lose some battles, but **we keep fighting because it's worth it.***

It's always, always worth it."

You can join the Brain family and Midwest Innocence Project in the fight for justice by becoming a monthly donor, providing a one-time gift, or signing on as a partner or volunteer.

Learn more about your role in advocating for freedom for the hundreds of incarcerated innocent at themip.org/get-involved.