



FAMILIES FORWARD

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LGBTQ Youth and Foster Care

According to [childrensrights.org](https://www.childrensrights.org), children who identify as LGBTQ are “over-represented” in foster care. These individuals more commonly experience traumas like abuse, neglect, and discrimination. A study done in 2019 found that 30.4% of children in foster care are a part of the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ youth are also more likely to be harmed from various types of abuse and harassment they may experience in a setting like foster care, homeless shelters, or juvenile justice setting.

It is crucial that children and youth in foster care, who identify as LGBTQ, be placed in homes with the supportive services they may need. Additionally, it is important that the professionals working with them are advocating for them and properly assessing their needs to reduce risk factors such as fleeing placements or sexual exploitation. For more information, please visit <https://www.childrensrights.org/lgbtq-2/>.

It is so important to support our children and youth who identify as LGBTQ by ensuring they have supportive placement and appropriate services. Here at Forever Families, our mission is to advocate for all children and youth, especially those who are disproportionately represented in the foster care system.

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EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Samantha Runyon

Samantha has been working for Forever Families for almost 3 years. Her supervisor wanted to acknowledge the hard work that she has been putting in towards reaching her professional development goals. Samantha is receptive to feedback and strives to become a better worker. She is currently going to school for social work and hopes to one day be an Infant Mental Health Therapist.



RAFFLE WINNERS



1st Place: Roy & Carol
43" SMART TV



2nd Place- Pamela
\$100 Gift Card to Ciao Restaurant



3rd Place- Thomas & Rebekah
Buffalo Wild Wings Gift Basket & Gift Card

***A Special Thanks to our Foster Parent
Appreciation Raffle Donors:***

Local Businesses:

- Bigby Coffee
- Buffalo Wild Wings
- Dairy Queen
- Detroit Burger Bar
- Detroit Tigers
- Emagine Theater
- Phoneix Theatres
- TGI Fridays

Additional Donors:

- Robert Cowans
- MJ
- Cedric & Cheryl Jackson

One Family's Foster Journey: Pat & Becky

Approved to Adopt: For 2 years

Why domestic adoption? We chose Domestic Adoption because we felt that it would be the best fit for us at the time we were in our lives. We were unable to have children biologically, and we wanted an option that would have a permanent outcome for us. Meaning - we understood that the goal of a foster to adopt program is reunification with the birth parents, and although we support that goal in general, we were not emotionally in a place where we wanted to pursue a potential placement that might only be temporary for us.

We also liked how we were asked about our choices in the situation - such as the level of openness of the adoption we were comfortable with, and if we had any preferences regarding gender, race, or other factors, such as medical needs the child might have. In our journey to have a child, there were so many instances where we did not have any control over the situation, so it was nice to be asked what we felt might be the best match for our family.

Tell us about your adoption experience! The adoption experience is a long, emotional journey for sure! Our journey began when we got married, and felt joy and excitement to begin a family together. Then, we felt sadness and disappointment when that did not happen for us. We went through many other emotions to even get to the point where we decided to pursue adoption, including doubt and fear - Were we too old at this point? Would the expectant mother back out? Would anyone even pick us? When we finally did make the decision that we were ready to pursue adoption, we did feel supported by Forever Families. They had great communication with us, and provided us with a lot of information about the process. The wait was long for us, and there were some opportunities that came up that did not work out. There were even moments where we questioned whether or not we had made the right decision, but we stayed committed, and held our faith, and now have a beautiful baby boy that we couldn't imagine our lives without, and everything we went through suddenly became worth it!

Any advice for other prospective Domestic Adoptive parents? Our advice for prospective parents would be to be prepared for the wait, to keep an open mind when opportunities are presented to you, but to also know your limits as parents. I think that when you desire a child so badly, you might be tempted to rush in to a situation that you may not be fully prepared for. The outcome of that decision might not be fair to you, or to the child you have decided to bring in to your life.

Don't be afraid to ask questions! Even if the information has been given to you several times, there is so much to know and to understand about this process, that you might need to be told again - and that's ok. And finally, seek support from your own personal network! There were many times when we called our friends or family because something happened along this journey where we needed to vent, or to get reassurance, or to ask questions, or even just to share our feelings of anger, or fear, and even joy! This process is so much easier when you know you're not going through it alone!

What else are we up to?

- We currently have 91 foster children in care.
- So far in 2021, we have:
 - Reunified 20 children with their birth parents.
 - Finalized 11 State Ward adoptions.
 - Licensed 3 foster homes.
 - Completed 1 Guardianship.
 - Finalized 2 adoptions

Don't forget about your training hours!

The monthly support group for foster parents is the 4th Saturday of the month from 9-11 am.

Remember you earn 2 training hours every time you attend a support group, and have an opportunity to receive a prize by attending support groups.

Our Upcoming Support Group Dates & Topics:

07/24/21- Foster Parent Burnout

08/28/21- Mental Health in Children

09/22/21- Educational supports and IEPs

Email SNEDWID@Forever-Families.org to Register.