

Dominick Family Adoption Story National Adoption Month, November 2014

IN THE END, WE KNEW IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. WE WANTED TO BE A FAMILY.

This is the story of the Dominick family
Spring Hill, Kansas

DEBBIE AND CLINT DOMINICK KNEW THEY WANTED TO HELP CHILDREN, SO THEY BECAME FOSTER PARENTS. TWO OF THEIR FIRST PLACEMENTS—ALONZO AND ARON.

Debbie: WE WERE JUST USED TO BEING A SINGLE COUPLE. WE HAD BEEN MARRIED SEVEN YEARS. SO WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY TOYS, AND THAT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS WHEN THE BOYS GOT HERE, THEY WERE LOOKING AROUND AND THEY WERE LIKE "WHERE ARE THE TOYS?" AND WE WERE LIKE "WE'LL GET THEM TOMORROW. BECAUSE WE DIDN'T KNOW IF THEY WERE GOING TO BE TEENAGERS OR BABIES AND SO IT WAS JUST REALLY HARD TO PLAN FOR THAT.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE THE COUPLE KNEW THESE BOYS WHO STUMBLED INTO THEIR LIVES WOULD FOREVER CHANGE THEM.

Clint: ARON HAD ORIGINALLY PICKED A ROOM AND ALONZO WANTED THE ROOM, SO HE WAS GRACIOUS AND GAME THE ROOM TO ALONZO. GOT ALONZO TUCKED IN, WENT TO TUCK IN ARON AND WHEN HE LAID HIS HEAD DOWN ON THE PILLOW, IT WAS JUST THIS LOOK OF LIKE THIS IS THE SOFTEST BED I HAD EVER BEEN IN. LIKE HE MELTED INTO IT AND HE HAD THIS HALF-SMILE ON HIS FACE THAT HE HAD A BED AND COVERS, AND A SOFT PILLOW AN SOFT PAJAMAS, THE THINGS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED THAT SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T HAVE OR THEY'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED. AND SO HE, IT TOOK HIM A LONG TIME TO TRUST BUT WHEN THAT TRUST CAME THROUGH, IT WAS LIKE A HUGE BREAKTHROUGH FOR HIM. IT WAS PRETTY COOL.

SOON IT BECAME CLEAR ARON AND ALONZO WOULD BECOME THEIR ADOPTED SONS. BUT THE FAMILY WAS ABOUT TO GROW EVEN MORE.

Clint: WHEN ARON AND ALONZO WERE FIRST LIVING HERE, WE QUESTIONED THE CONNECTION THEY HAD WITH THEIR SIBLINGS, BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T TALK A LOT ABOUT THEM, AND WHEN WE WERE ASKED IF WE WERE WILLING TO TAKE THE OTHER THREE, WE BROUGHT THEM IN FOR A WEEKEND. AND UH, OBVIOUSLY THE KIDS WERE TREMENDOUSLY EXCITED TO BE TOGETHER AND GET TO SEE EACH OTHER, BUT THE OTHER THREE HAD TO LEAVE AT THE END OF THE WEEKEND, AND I JUST REMEMBER KIND OF AS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS OF CLARITY IN YOUR LIFE. THE KIDS LEFT AND ALONZO WENT INTO THE BATHROOM AND WHEN HE CAME OUT, HE WAS JUST, I MEAN I HAVE NEVER SEEN A CHILD WEEP, HE WAS JUST WEEPING. AND I THOUGHT HE HAD HURT HIMSELF, AND WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT WAS WRONG, AND HE SAID, "I MISS MY SISTER AND BROTHERS." AND IT WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS WHERE I WAS LIKE, YEAH, I THINK WE'RE GOING TO HAVE FIVE KIDS. WE KNEW THAT THERE WAS A BOND THERE, AND THEY JUST NEEDED TO BE TOGETHER."

MARIANN, LAWRENCE AND R-J NOW COMPLETED THIS FAMILY OF SEVEN.
THROUGH THE PROCESS, THERE'S BEEN SOME ADJUSTING.

Debbie: GETTING FAMILIAR WITH DAYCARE SYSTEMS WITH SCHOOL SYSTEMS ALL OF THAT KIND OF
STUFF CHANGED, FOOD, EATING, WE USED TO EAT REALLY GOOD.

SHE WAS A GOURMET CHEF.

I WASN'T REALLY A CHEF

AND THEN WE WENT TO EATING HOTDOGS AND MAC AND CHEESE AND THINGS THAT KIDS LIKE TO EAT,
INSTEAD OF SUSHI AND PORK TENDERLOIN.

FANCY THINGS.

YES, BUT WE KIND OF EAT FANCY THINGS NOW, YOU GUYS ARE USED TO IT NOW, BUT FIRST IT WAS A
HARD TRANSITION.

RIBS AND WINGS.

YES, YOU GUYS LOVE RIBS AND WINGS.
I LOVE RIBS AND WINGS.

DEBBIE WORKS IN CHILD WELFARE AND HAS WITNESSED FIRST-HAND THE DEVASTATING OUTCOMES
FOR CHILDREN WHO LIVE THEIR ENTIRE EARLY LIVES IN ABUSIVE HOMES AND FOSTER CARE.

Debbie: THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND A LOT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES WITH
MOM AND DAD AND SOMETIMES NEGLECT OF THEIR KIDS. SOME KIDS DON'T GET FED AND THEY WILL
EAT OR ARE FED MAGAZINES, SO WITHOUT WATER, DON'T HAVE CLOTHES TO WEAR, DON'T HAVE
SHOES TO WEAR, SEE KILLINGS, MURDERS AND SO THOSE ARE A LOT OF THINGS THAT ARE DIFFICULT
FOR KIDS.

DEBBIE SAYS JUST AS SHE OVERCAME DIFFICULTIES AS A FOSTER YOUTH, SHE KNOWS CHILDREN IN
FOSTER CARE CAN OVERCOME THEIR PASTS.

Debbie: AND IT'S NOT THAT THEY CANNOT BE HELPED OR BECOME MORE...I THINK THEY ARE
STRONGER BECAUSE OF IT. I THINK A LOT OF TIMES, MORE MATURE BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN
THROUGH SO MUCH.

SOMETHING SHE'S SEEN IN HER OWN CHILDREN.

Debbie: SO FULL OF LOVE. I CAN'T EVEN TELL YOU THE AMOUNT OF BLESSING IT HAS BEEN.

FOR THOSE CONSIDERING FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION, SHE SAYS THE HARDEST PART FOR THEM, WAS
WAITING TO SEE IF THE CHILDREN WOULD HAVE TO GO BACK HOME.

Debbie: AND THAT WAS JUST A POINT WHERE I HAD TO COME TO TERMS WITH IT AND SAY, OK, AS MUCH AS I LOVE THESE KIDS, GOD LOVES THEM EVEN MORE, AND SO IF HE IS GOING TO PUT THEM BACK AT HOME, THEN IT'S HIS WILL. SO, I HAD TO BE WILLING TO LET GO. AND, I HONESTLY FELT LIKE, IT WAS WHEN I WAS ABLE TO DO THAT, AND I'M NOT SAYING THAT THIS IS THE MAGIC, BUT BEING AT PEACE WITH THAT AND KNOWING THAT WHATEVER WAS HAPPENING WAS GOD'S PLAN, WAS WHAT HELPED ME TO GET THROUGH THAT TIME.

Clint: YOU DEAL WITH THINGS THAT MAYBE YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD HAVE TO. YOU DEAL WITH THINGS THAT CAN TEST YOU. BUT IN THE END, I GO BACK TO THAT COMMITMENT WORD. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO DO IT, YOU HAVE TO COMMIT TO IT.

THEY ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO CONSIDER ADOPTION.

Clint: THERE ARE SO MANY KIDS THAT ARE JUST WAITING. THAT ARE JUST WAITING, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW ELSE TO SAY IT, BUT THEY ARE JUST WAITING AND IT JUST KILLS ME...THIS IS SOMETHING THAT IS VERY NEAR AND DEAR TO MY HEART. SO, I DON'T THINK THIS IS FOR EVERYBODY, BUT I THINK IT IS FOR A LOT MORE PEOPLE THAN THEY GIVE THEMSELVES CREDIT FOR.

AND FOR FAMILIES CONSIDERING ADOPTING OLDER CHILDREN???

Debbie: I THINK THERE IS STILL KIND OF THAT STEREOTYPE OR MISCONCEPTION TODAY, ESPECIALLY WITH TEENS THAT ARE FOSTER CARE. TEENS IN GENERAL ARE SCARY. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THEM BEING FOSTER CARE OR NOT OR ADOPTED (laughing).

Debbie: OUR KIDS ALL PLAY SPORTS AND OUR KIDS PLAY, WELL, WE HAVE THREE KIDS WHO PLAY VIOLIN AND CELLO AND GET GOOD GRADE, BUT YOU KNOW, THEY GET INTO THE NORMAL TROUBLE AT SCHOOL. THEY AREN'T ANY DIFFERENT THAN ANY OF THE OTHER KIDS AT THEIR SCHOOL.

THE DOMINICKS SAY THE REWARDS OF ADOPTING ARE BEYOND BELIEF.

Clint: AS MUCH AS YOU THINK THAT WE WERE CHANGING THEIR LIVES, IT HAS CHANGES OUR LIVES AS MUCH OR EVEN MORE. IT'S CHALLENGING PARENTING WITH FIVE KIDS, WHETHER THEY ARE YOUR BIRTH CHILDREN OR ADOPTED OR FOSTER. BUT IT'S THE HARDEST JOB YOU'LL EVER LOVE. IT IS DEFINITELY, I WOULD SAY, WHAT IT HAS BEEN, IT IS HARD AT TIMES, BUT REWARDING.

WHEN ASKED WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING ADOPTED?

RJ
BEING PROTECTED.

Aron
HAVING CLOTHES, HAVING A ROOF OVER MY HEAD AND HAVING GOOD PARENTS.

Alonzo
THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING ADOPTED IS GETTING TO LIVE WITH THESE TWO AND THESE FOUR AND THESE TWO GORGEOUS GUYS.

Mariann

GETTING TO HAVE OPPORTUNITIES THAT YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE IF YOU WEREN'T ADOPTED, LIKE PLAYING AN INSTRUMENT OR GOING OUT FOR SPORTS AND GETTING A GOOD EDUCATION...NOBODY LIKES THAT.

39:40

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF BEING ADOPTED? SPENDING EVERYDAY WITH YOU GUYS. LOTS OF SNUDDLING GOING ON. (kiss) YOU'RE A BIG SNUGLER AREN'T YOU (kiss) LOVE YOU.

If you're interested in adoption, call 877-457-5430.

We'll help you begin the process.

Who will love me?

I will love you.