

Jay and Griffin:

A Father's Journey

Griffin is 13 years old and has spent the past nine years in foster care. He lived with four different foster families and has endured the uncertainty and instability of moving from home to home. Griffin met Jay when he was being fostered by Jay's business partner, who lived in Connecticut. Unfortunately, that particular placement didn't work out, and Griffin went to live with yet another foster family. By that time, Jay and Griffin had formed a bond, with Jay filling the role of surrogate uncle to Griffin.

Jay was living a life that was, by his telling, all about himself. But he wanted to give back and help guide a child. He began seriously thinking about fatherhood. "As a single gay man without a family of my own, I decided I wanted to start a family and was looking into surrogacy and adoption," says Jay. After Griffin's placement disrupted, Jay decided he wanted to become a foster parent to Griffin with the goal of eventually adopting him. His commitment to the process was tested from the beginning, as Griffin was living with a foster family in Connecticut and Jay resided in New Jersey. Jay took the steps to become a licensed therapeutic foster parent with Children's Aid and Family Services, and the agency worked with The Connecticut Department of Children and Families to drive the process forward. "I visited Griffin every weekend," says Jay, who drove two-and-a-half hours each way to make sure he spent time with Griffin.



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To help him prepare to care for a child who has gone through trauma, Jay took specialized trainings with Children's Aid. "Jay learned about trauma-informed care to understand Griffin's needs," says Marcia Fisher, Administrator of Adoption & Permanency Services. "He has a strong commitment to Griffin's growth and success in life. And Children's Aid will always be a resource to them."

After the year passed, Griffin was ready to come to New Jersey and find a permanent family and home with Jay. They worked closely with Children's Aid and Family Services' staff in the Therapeutic Foster Care program. At first, Griffin often felt anxious and had trouble making friends in his new school. With the guidance of Jay and the staff, Griffin has become more independent and confident. "Griffin has become an excellent student and has made the honor roll the past two years," says Darrell Brunson, Case Manager. "He sees Jay as his father."



CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Jay says that the agency's staff helped him through the process of fostering a child who has endured trauma and instability. "They helped me get ready for what I needed to do to parent Griffin and prepared me to not need so much support."

For his part, Jay enjoys Griffin's company and the feeling of reliving his own youth that parenting evokes. "Griffin is 13 years old now, and he still gets excited about the holidays," he says. "He also helps keep me in the loop on what's popular. He loves the Avengers and the digital world. He plays Xbox with his friends, which has been a way for him to stay connected during the pandemic. He often asks, 'Did you know?' after researching a topic in which he's interested on Google. He reads ingredients on food labels and is very interested in learning to cook. This has been a match made in heaven."

A new adventure is about to begin for Jay and Griffin: They are moving to Miami! "Griffin is excited about moving to the warm climate," says Jay. "He's energetic and looking forward to swimming and learning to surf. I want him to enjoy these years we will have together, eventually go on to college and have a good life." ●

Names and photos have been changed to protect clients' privacy.



According to the North American Council on Adoptable Children, once waiting children in foster care are nine years old or older, they are much less likely to be adopted. It takes commitment, hard work and empathy to help a child overcome adversity and build a strong future. It is only with your help that we can partner with and provide support and training to dedicated foster parents such as Jay.

Your support also helps us provide community residences, specialized services and day programming for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; alcohol and drug misuse prevention education and recovery support; and other vital community programs.

Together, we are changing lives.

Thank You!

Resources for adoptive parents:

The New Jersey Adoption Resource Center : www.njarch.org

A "One Stop Resource for those Touched by Adoption" in the State of New Jersey with hundreds of sortable pages of information and resources for those involved with adoption and/or foster care. Includes a toll free warm line, 877-4-ARCHNJ (877-4-27-2465) to help answer questions about adoption, a free lending library, newsletters, support group information, links to online learning and more.

Find online education programs: www.njarch.org/e-learning

Listen to podcasts related to adoption: www.njarch.org/podcasts

