

Bringing Lexi Home



Our adoption process was filled with hope, fear, tears, and laughter. When we started this journey to expand our family, we went to the DFCS office in our town, which was supposed to help us start the process, such as classes we would need take, be able to answer our questions, and help guide us on the journey to bringing a child home. What we got instead was a lot of pushback, with statements like, you have to foster first, are you sure this is what you want to do, and why don't you have children of your own, then after about a month of this, the final straw was DFCS telling us



that they don't do adoptions only foster care. At that point, we were livid. We called the head of DFCS and had a very nice conversation with her, she was very apologetic and told us that yes they do adoptions, and would have someone from our local office contact us. I thanked her for her time, but said after our experience we would be looking elsewhere for guidance.

We hit the Net, researched no less than 10 different agencies. We would call and leave messages for call backs, some actually answered the phone. When they did, the conversations felt like a burden. They were in a rush to answer any questions, with conflicting answers. When I called A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, I spoke with Julia. We spoke for about 45 minutes. She was courteous, knowledgeable, and more important, honest. She put me at ease by not sugar coating anything. I asked if it would be ok if my husband called to speak with her when he got home as well, and she said of course. He called and spent about an hour on the phone with Julia as well. After both our conversations with Julia, and references from couples that had worked with the Agency, with felt confident in our decision to go with A Adoption Advocates of Georgia!

The next week, we received a packet in the mail, full of information and paperwork that needed to be filled out to start the home study process. The task seemed daunting. We had to have background checks, physicals, references from friends and family, financial records, pets needed vaccinations, a home inspection, and classes to deal with any issues that a child from foster care

may have. While doing all of this, we searched for a child that we thought would be the perfect match to us and us to her/him.

We fell in love with a picture of a little girl, she was 13, and her bio said she was fun loving, loved the outdoors and longed for a forever family. My husband and I submitted our home study and were one of two families chosen to meet the child we hoped would one day be ours. With high hopes and a lot of anticipation we headed out to meet her. Upon meeting our hopefully future daughter, we quickly learned she didn't want to be adopted. We tried to talk with her, took her to dinner (her case worker and attorney joined us) she barely said a word. The next day we were allowed a few hours with her by ourselves to see if we could make a connection, so we took her to lunch then to get her nails done, something fun and girly that she might enjoy. The only thing she said the entire time was, "I want to stay here, and don't want to leave." We dropped her back off at her foster mother's home, and asked if she wanted to go to breakfast or do anything special the following day....her reply was "no, I want to hang out at home and watch TV." We told her foster mother we would wait to hear from her if she changed her mind. By 1 o'clock the next day, we had not heard a word. We called her and she did not want to talk to us. At this point we knew that the placement of this child with us was not going to happen. Heartbroken, we called Julia and the child's case worker. Julia told us not to give up on adopting a child, she was and continued to be very supportive and understanding, more importantly, honest with us about the ups and downs of this journey. So we packed our bags and headed home, both of us unsure if we wanted to continue with the risk of heartache. During the long drive back, my husband and I talked, cried, disagreed, laughed, and came to realize, that yes, a child was worth ALL the ups and downs, joys and heartache we may go through to give a child a chance at a better life, brighter future, and to teach them about unconditional love.

The journey begins again. Once we got home, it took us a few days to continue the search, the heartbreak still fresh, we found another child, 9-years-old, and who we thought would fit into our family. We read her bio, saw her picture, my husband's heart just burst....she is our daughter; I feel it, can't you? I was still apprehensive and refused to get my hopes up, but every time I looked at her picture my heart started to heal. We submitted our home study and a week later got the call that we had been chosen to meet her. The day finally came, as we walked up to the house, she was in the window waving at us, a smile that melted my heart and at that moment, I knew without a doubt....there's my baby. She ran up and gave us both hugs, we colored, did crafts went for ice cream and spent the entire day together. When it was time to leave she asked if we were going to come back...yes, the next day, we told her. We went to the petting zoo, the pet shop, the mall....yes this precious little girl was my baby, I knew it with every fiber of my being.

When it came time to say goodbye, I didn't want to leave, she didn't want us to leave, but there was still a lot left to do.

Before we left the state, we met with her social worker. She said that the child had never bonded with anyone so quickly, and though it wasn't official yet, she was sure we would become her parents. We were thrilled!! Now the waiting process begins. There were visits every two weeks, traveling such a distance was draining, but worth it every time we got to see her precious smile, especially the first time she said, "Daddy can we go to the pool?" I literally cried with joy. We would Skype during the week we weren't visiting. Of course, more paperwork needed to be filled out. Trying to reach our daughters case worker, was almost impossible, but we persevered. Our daughter was finally able to come visit us after 4 months of travel, every two weeks to Connecticut. She was scared, nervous and excited all at the same time. Her first visit in our home went well. We showed her where Daddy worked, took her to church, showed her the town and she liked it, but she was a little standoffish. Being young enough to understand all that was happening she was both scared and hopeful. She was overwhelmed and ready to go back to the only home she knew. We were nervous that she didn't want us to adopt her.

About two weeks went by and we were able to talk to her again. She needed time to process all that was happening. We understood, but we were still worried. All we wanted was what was best for her, regardless of the heartache we might endure. The worry was unwarranted. She loved us and wanted us as Mama and Daddy, she just didn't know how to show it.

We kept talking through Skype, on the phone, and there were many more visits which helped ease her mind and ours. Placement finally came, and the transition at first was easy. She was kind, obedient, and helpful around the house. After about 3 months, the attitude, temper tantrums, and screaming started. My husband and I were constantly at the doctor, therapist office, and on the phone with Julia. One major problem we had was every time her social worker would come for a visit; the tantrums would start all over again, some of them violent, if there was a medication change, more outbursts. We were exhausted, battered and bruised, but still committed to our daughter. The hardest part during this period was having no control over who her doctors were...everything needed to be cleared through the state of Connecticut where she came from. We couldn't even pick the school she went to.

The school was designated for unruly children, our daughter didn't belong there. Yes, the classes were small and there was a lot of individual attention which she needed, but the older children, the language they used was not conducive to a good learning environment. Needless to say, I was back on the phone with Julia. I also called our daughter's social worker and demanded that she be moved to another school. The transition to a "regular" school was slow, but progress was being

made, half day at the "corrective" school, the other half at the "regular" school. She is now fully integrated and passing all her classes. Yes, there are still setbacks, but she is adjusting and on track to be promoted to the next grade.

Time for finalization was fast approaching, we were all so excited and happy, especially our daughter, finally she didn't have to worry about being as she put it "taken away." We were told we were needed in court to finalize, well, that presented a problem. Our daughter was fearful of going back and we as her parents didn't want to put her through anymore trauma. There had to be another way. After weeks of discussion, we were able to finalize in a phone conference. Julia was there to help celebrate!

After finalization, we had our daughter reevaluated and no, she didn't have what they claimed. Now we have a correct diagnosis of Asperger's and ADHD. We have had to learn how to talk to our daughter in a different manner and with a lot of patience. Had we had a correct diagnosis at the beginning of this journey, known all that we know now, nothing would have changed. She is our daughter, through the good times which are great, but especially through the bad when the power of love is tested and always conquers every obstacle.

Julia has been there for every milestone, every tear, and all the laughter. Her weekly visits during this process were helpful, informative, and our daughter formed a bond with her. Since finalization, we still speak often and visit when we can. Julia and this agency care about the children they are placing and the families they are being placed with. Their honesty has been a blessing. A Adoption Advocates is a wonderful agency and I would recommend them to anyone looking to grow their family.

With Grateful Hearts,

Jimmy, Kristi & Lexi C.

Hinesville, Georgia