COUPLE OPENS THEIR HEARTS AND HOME TO BUILD LOVING, FOREVER FAMILY

For Matt and Dave, their desire had long been to share their lives with children. In 2010, when they first came to RFK Children’s Action Corps’ Bright Futures Adoption Center, they were some of the youngest people to embark on the adoption journey with the program.

After college and starting successful careers, Matt as a pediatric dentist and Dave as a hospital operations director, they soon prioritized creating a family. But they weren’t sure how.

At that time, they didn’t know any same-sex couples who had children. They did a lot of research and considered a surrogate, but kept coming back to adoption. Karen Cheyney, Bright Futures’ program director, was supportive and encouraging in their open adoption decision and put them in touch with other gay couples who had adopted.

“We were so focused on the process,” explained Dave. “When we met Karen, she helped us focus on the details of parenting. She pressed us on parenting styles and made us think about what our community looks like.”

These conversations helped Matt and Dave determine what type of children they would be best suited to parent. They have now adopted three infants through Bright Futures — Miles, Avalyn and Finn. Each of their three adoption stories is unique, but there are some common threads, including that all the children’s birth families have stayed engaged with the family.

“Each open adoption is different and unique. We work on a case-by-case basis to do what is in the best interest of all parties,” said Karen. “Matt and Dave have compassion and flexibility, which is very important. They have very open communication.”

“Open adoption makes a whole lot of sense because, as our children get older, there’s ongoing information for them,” said Dave. “Also, there are no secrets, which is much better for everybody.”

Matt and Dave completed their home study with approval to start networking with expecting couples in June 2011. They met Miles’ birth parents that November, when his mother was seven months pregnant. “It was the first case we were presented and it was a perfect match,” said Matt.

The process was smooth and they welcomed Miles into their home when he was born in February 2012.

Since they had learned about openness from the start, Matt and Dave were prepared for building a relationship with Miles’ birth family. Initially, they had obvious fears, but over time they let down their walls and grew comfortable with Miles’ extended family.

Miles is half Mexican and they have celebrated bringing Mexican culture into his life.

Now five-years-old, Miles knows his whole story. “Miles loves it. He’s very family oriented,” said Matt. “He has a really good relationship with his birth parents and his grandparents. He gets excited to tell people he’s adopted. He’s very proud.”

As first-time parents, they decided to wait before expanding their family. When Miles was three, Matt and Dave created another life milestone and married, with Miles celebrating at their sides.

When they were ready to pursue a second adoption, the scenarios were more complicated. They had two cases where they matched with birth parents who chose to parent their children. This was devastating for Matt and Dave as they had been hopeful to become parents again and provide Miles with a sibling.

Eventually, they matched with Avalyn’s birth parents, Lindsay and Tyson. They brought Avalyn home in February 2016, on Miles’ fourth birthday. He was a little more independent and thrilled with the exciting gift of a sister.

In addition to visiting several times a year, Lindsay and Tyson text and stay connected with the family on social media. They appreciate that the couple is incorporating Avalyn’s Caucasian, African American and Hispanic heritage and Miles’ Mexican culture into their own family.

Last spring, Matt and Dave decided they were ready for a third child. They soon learned that a couple was looking for a family like theirs and they eagerly engaged in getting to know the birth family. They were overjoyed when the birth parents asked them to name the baby.

In their first two adoptions, the children were named by their birth parents. When their son was born in July 2017, Matt and Dave named him Finn.

Shortly after Finn joined the family, it was time for Bright Futures’ annual summer picnic for adoptive and birth families. It’s an afternoon of celebration, connections and relationship building.

“This year at the picnic, Ava’s family was in full force. For Finn, it was the same way,” said Dave. “Miles birth grandparents were there. And Finn’s family brought a gift set for Ava and Miles.”

Matt and Dave believe families come in various forms and are something to cherish.

The list of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins among all the families is extensive. “We haven’t counted the total, but I can tell you what it is anyway,” said Matt. “It’s exactly the number it’s supposed to be.”

Of their future, Dave said, “If we are in the position, and we have the means, we may have more children. For now, we’re outnumbered, especially with two dogs.”

AN OPEN ADOPTION STORY

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