Since December 2019, Celeste O. and her husband, Pedro, have opened the doors of their home to children who needed a safe, caring, and stable place while moving through the process of family reunification.

Their journey with the CFS short-term foster care program began in a simple way: a neighbor told them about the program and the need for bilingual families willing to welcome children who had arrived in the United States after experiencing difficult circumstances and separation from their loved ones. That conversation inspired them to help and, over time, grew into a commitment that has lasted for more than six years. This family represents in a very special way what it means not only to open your home, but also to open your heart.

Celeste and Pedro especially remember the first child they welcomed, who stayed with them for more than three months and shared meaningful moments such as Christmas and New Year's. Over the years, they have learned that it is often the smallest things that make the greatest difference: sharing a meal, listening, creating routines, celebrating an accomplishment, or simply being there. Some of their most cherished memories are the afternoons when the children returned from activities with the CFS team, excited to show them a drawing, a clay figure, or a craft they had created. Watching them play, laugh, and gradually feel more comfortable reminded Celeste and Pedro that, regardless of their circumstances, they were still children who needed to feel safe, valued, and loved.

But being a foster parent also means learning to say goodbye. Although each departure can bring difficult emotions, Celeste and Pedro find comfort in knowing that, during a time of uncertainty, they were able to provide safety, reassurance, and a place where each child could feel part of a family. As they explain, *"Knowing that we kept the children safe and gave them the comfort they needed during their transition toward reunification with their family is what makes it all worthwhile."*

Throughout these years, Celeste and Pedro have also deeply valued the support of the short-term foster program team, whose clinical staff, case managers, and support personnel are available to guide foster families and respond to their needs. Their experience is exactly what encourages them to reassure others who may feel called to become foster parents but still have questions or fears.

Their message is simple: you will not be alone, and opening your home can become one of the most meaningful experiences of your life. For more than six years, their family has shown that changing a child's life does not always require grand gestures; sometimes it begins with an open door, a shared meal, a listening ear, and a heart willing to care. Center For Family Services and the foster care team extend their deepest gratitude to Celeste, Pedro, and the entire family for their commitment, generosity, and service.

Thank you for giving so many children something they should never have to go without: the chance to feel safe, supported, and loved while waiting to be reunited with their families.