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For more information, contact:
Karyn Pratt
724-804-7106
karyn.pratt@adelphoi.org

Adelphoi Helps the Benjamin Family Transform Challenges into a Thriving Family of Eight

Janese Benjamin had always envisioned having a large family, but her challenges with pregnancy made her question whether that dream would ever come true.

Fate stepped in, however, when a special little girl captured Janese's heart and inspired her and her husband, William Sr., to foster and adopt through Adelphoi. Today, the Benjamins have grown into a family of eight.

"I always wanted a lot of kids," began Janese, who along with William, are the proud biological parents of 16-year-old William Jr. and 15-year-old Abby. "We had problems and I was older, so I didn't want to risk it again," she explained.

"We had our boy and girl and we were happy."

But years later, while Abby was participating in cheerleading, a little girl on the team named Ella caught Janese's attention.

"She was the cutest little thing," she recalled. I knew her family and I could tell they were broken up and that there were problems. I heard that she was going into foster care and that's when we called to start the process to get certified as foster parents.

"I thought, 'some day she is going to be mine.' I needed her in my life."

Once certified, the Benjamins began fostering children in need while monitoring Ella's ever-changing situation. After initially being placed in foster care, she returned to her family, only to re-enter the system again, which left the couple uncertain about the chances of welcoming her into their home.

One day they received a long-awaited call from Ella's aunt, who had been caring for her at the time. She informed them that the girl was returning to foster care and urged them to contact Adelphoi immediately.

After much anticipation, Ella, now 15, arrived at the Benjamin's Monroeton home in August of 2019 and was officially adopted in June of 2021.

The family's journey with Adelphoi did not end with Ella's adoption, however.

Hannah, 15, initially came to the Benjamin's residence in 2022 for respite care. After acting out upon returning to her previous living situation, she was ultimately placed with Janese and William for foster care. She was adopted by the couple in August of 2024.

Two young boys are also currently living with the family as foster children.

"Skrye [age 7] came around the same time as Hannah," Janese recalled. "He had issues in his other home and his mother was homeless and didn't have anywhere to go. Neither did his dad.

"Denver [age 7] came about a year ago for respite and started having problems where he was at. He came back to us after that. His mom and dad are homeless, also."

Janese admits that the family of eight has experienced some growing pains, but love, patience, and partnership has prevailed.

"The age difference can be a challenge," she explained. "Sometimes one child feels that the other is receiving more, or that the biological kids are favored over the other children, and vice-versa.

"Abby had a little bit of a hard time with the girls and she still has her days, but not often. She understands where they come from. William Jr. had to adjust some. He is a computer kid, so he just goes to his room," she stated.

"All of my kids feel like they are brothers and sisters, though" Janese proudly stated. "Hannah and Ella have become really good friends. Skrye and Denver are, but aren't," she laughed. "They're enemies and best friends."

Janese praised her husband, a steelworker, for his incredible support and dedication to their family. "He takes the older kids to sports and activities and watches the younger ones at night while I work," she said, adding that she works as a teacher's aide, cleaner, and thrift store owner.

While she acknowledges that it can be emotionally challenging when a foster child leaves, Janese believes that the most fulfilling aspect of their fostering and adoption journey has been witnessing the children's growth and development.

"Most have a bad background and watching them become a new person— one who knows right from wrong— and how they progress is so rewarding," she stated.

“Any time one of them calls me mom, it is really special. When they hug me, I just melt.”

May is National Foster Care Month — a time to recognize the critical role foster families play in the lives of at-risk youth. According to childwelfare.gov, more than 365,000 children and youth are in foster care, each one deserving a safe, stable home. If you're interested in becoming a foster parent, contact Adelphoi at www.adelphoifoster.org or 1-800-KID-5928 to learn how you can make a difference in a child's life.

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