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## **STRONGER FAMILIES, BRIGHTER FUTURES**

### **The Gift of a Forever Family: Janelle & Blayr's Story**

This National Adoption Month, **Janelle and Blayr's story reminds us that family isn't defined by structure**—it's defined by the feelings and bonds created when caring for the special little ones who come into your life.

Janelle understood how to provide love and support as a pre-K educator and kinship parent. She spent a decade raising three nieces in addition to her own daughter. It was a busy household, but Janelle thrived on the energy. When her daughter reached high school and the nieces were in college, Janelle knew she had it in her heart to become a foster care (resource) parent.

On Mother's Day weekend 2019, Janelle got the call. A 3-week-old baby, Blayr, needed a loving home. **"It was the best Mother's Day gift ever,"** she recalls.

For nearly two years, Janelle cared for Blayr as he became the newest member of her family. However, resource parents are only there to provide care when a family member can't, and in Blayr's circumstance, a cousin came forth to raise Blayr and his biological sister. This was sad for Janelle, but she understood and supported the move.

Then, circumstances changed again when Blayr's cousin realized they weren't able to manage the care of both Blayr and his sister.

Blayr was back with Janelle, and she was elated. Soon after, she had some concerns about Blayr's developmental skills and whether he needed special supports. With confirmation that Blayr was on the autism spectrum, **Janelle felt prepared to use her educator and mom knowledge to ensure he had an "abundance of life" and support.** She made sure she had resources in place for Blayr to properly grow and learn and then started moving toward adopting the little boy that she loved so much.



**Two years later, Blayr officially became her son.** Now six, he spent Halloween trick-or-treating with both his adopted sister and his bio-sister (who was adopted by Janelle's good friend). The two families will also celebrate the holidays together. ***They are bonded by love, resilience, and mutual support!***



***Can you believe the holiday season is almost here?*** For many of us, the upcoming winter reminds us of warm gatherings and family traditions. **We have a holiday tradition of our own, Brighter Holidays,** our annual gift-giving program for the children in Philadelphia who need some holiday cheer.



Join our effort to create a brighter holiday, by providing a special gift to every child and teen under our care. **Donate to our virtual gift-giving campaign and help us raise enough funds so every child and teen that we serve can receive a quality gift this holiday season!**

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