

Cory & Keith's Journey to Parenthood

We always knew we wanted to be parents from the day we met 9 years ago. When the time came to make those dreams come true we turned to adoption. We began to research adoption on the internet which was overwhelming. As a same sex couple we knew that our options were slightly limited in comparison to traditional heterosexual couples. We quickly learned that adopting out of the country was likely not an option for us given the many laws etc... of other countries. We also learned how lucky we were to live in New York which not only allowed same sex couples to adopt but recognized our marriage from Massachusetts. We spent months looking at different agencies but did not feel a personal connection to any of them. All were reputable agencies but we just didn't feel there was a connection. It was important to us that we work with people who truly understood what we were going through and what an emotional journey we were beginning. We wanted to know that someone would be there to hold our hand through the entire process. Eventually a friend referred us to Forever Families Through Adoption (FFTA).

We called the office and set up an orientation meeting. We had attended information sessions at other agencies and we were prepared to compete with the other hundred or so people in the room to have our questions answered. To our surprise we were to receive all the information about FFTA with only one other couple. We looked at each other when we found this out and thought "Is this for real; are we really going to have all our questions answered?" We sat with the Executive Director Joy S. Goldstein and other FFTA staff who told us all about FFTA and what we could expect if we decided to move forward. Finally we got honest realistic information, but most importantly we felt the "connection." It was the intimacy of the meeting that really made us feel like we were not just a "client." The meeting lasted more than 3 hours and we really felt like we were fully informed about what we could possibly expect.

The ride home was a quiet one. We were both processing the information and realizing that the dreams of becoming Dads might really happen. We spent the following weekend scouring over the paperwork. We knew that as much as we wanted to fill it out right then and there we needed to make sure we were prepared. We spent the next 3 to 4 months completing the application packet. Keep in mind we chose to move at a slower pace as I (Keith) felt that I needed to be finished with nursing school before bringing a child into our lives. Once our application was completed we began our adoption/parent training, created our "Dear Birthparent Letter" and prepared for our "home study." We had heard of the home study where a social worker comes to your house to make sure that it is safe and healthy for a child. What were we in store for? Was the house clean enough? Was the house too clean? Will she like us? Will our dog

be on her best behavior and not jump up on her? Becca came to see us on a Saturday so we were up early to make sure that there were not dust bunnies under the beds and our fire alarms were working. A quick trip to the grocery store for a warm apple pie that we would try to pass off as our own and a fire lit in the fireplace. Perfect! Becca arrived and could not have been nicer to us. Within minutes she put our minds at ease and we did not feel as if we were under a microscope. She met with us together and separately and toured the house. A few hours later our home visit was complete. On her way out she commented on the apple pie and asked if we made it. We had to be honest and owned up to buying it that morning which we all laughed about.

A few weeks later our home study was completed and all our documents were in place - we were officially approved to adopt. The next few months were an emotional roller coaster. We attended a few adoption conferences and learned that if we wanted to adopt quickly we needed to get ourselves visible to expectant mothers who were making an adoption plan. We got our toll free phone number, had a website made and we signed up for every adoption website that would host same sex couples profiles. Within weeks we began receiving phone calls on our 800 number from expectant mothers. Our profile allowed expectant mothers to contact us directly or FFTA. Most chose to call us directly. Every time we spoke with an expectant mom we were nervous. Did we say the right thing? Did she like us? Was she real? Unfortunately when you become too visible, especially on the internet, you open yourself up to possible scams. Some were financial and some were just emotional. We never fell victim to any financial scams, but we did to a couple of emotional ones. We would get our hopes up and then they would go down and the process would repeat itself. The entire time we were supported by the staff at FFTA. If we called or emailed them we really never waited longer than a few hours, if that, for someone to get back to us. We did have some really "down" days, but we kept telling ourselves, "the right child will come into our lives at the right time." We decided, with the support of FFTA, that we would have all future expectant mothers contact the agency directly, to protect us emotionally. It was hard to give up control, but we all felt it was the best decision.

Shortly after we updated our home study we went on our annual vacation to the Florida Keys. We had spent the day out on a boat and left our cell phones at the hotel. When we returned we discovered that we had a ton of missed calls and text messages. One message said "Call FFTA it's very important." Once we found cell phone reception we called the agency and Joy answered the phone. The words from her mouth that we will never forget were "your son was born today" and we could not hold back a flood of tears. A mom had given birth that morning and wanted to make an adoption plan for her son. She chose us!! The next day we were on a flight back

home as our son was born in New York. The next day it was off to the hospital with Joy to meet our baby boy. We fell in love with him the second we laid eyes on him. We spent the next couple of days with him in the hospital. We also had the opportunity to meet his mother. This was another highly emotional moment for all of us. We promised her that we would love her son unconditionally for the rest of our lives. He is the single most important thing in our lives. We have never known or felt the kind of love that we feel for our son. There are not words that we know of that could describe how deeply we feel for him. The team of people who work at FFTA have been wonderful to everyone involved in our adoption: us, his birth mother and our son. Dreams really do come true!!

