



my adoption story

GINA

I Always Knew

I have wanted to be a mother. It never really mattered to me how they came into my life and I truly never longed to be pregnant, so adoption was an easy choice. I stayed very busy with my career, family, and friends, and before I knew it, I was in my 40s and once again thinking about pursuing adoption. I began reaching out to agencies and was incredibly shocked to learn most places were not willing to work with a single woman. I was pretty frustrated and began losing hope when the seventh agency rejected me. I began looking into fertility treatments, only to be met again with questions of where my husband was and what he thought. It was a clear sign this wasn't the path for me, and I left the doctor's office.

I returned to researching adoption online and came across LifeLong Adoptions. After a phone call with the staff, I knew this was the place for me. It all seemed too good to be true after so many rejections and closed doors. I was genuinely shocked when LifeLong staff told me they would work with me and had had many single women adopt successfully.

From day one of working with LifeLong, I felt supported and hopeful. Between staff and my family and friends cheering me on, I knew I could get through anything. This journey was

not just about me but more so about the expectant mothers. There was only so much I could do. Remaining optimistic and honoring the space the expectant mothers were in truly helped with the waiting period. Over 18 months, I spoke to a few expectant mothers, but nothing ended up moving forward with them. I was at peace with that knowing those expectant mothers were doing what was best for them, as they should.

The Path That Led Me to You

I was traveling for work, and checking my voicemail, I discovered I had many missed calls from LifeLong. They wanted to talk to me, and once I got them on the phone, I was informed of a few details. An expectant mother in Georgia had chosen me; her baby had already been born and was just a few days old. I was told to stand by as they got more details. I continued traveling and waited patiently. I then received a call from staff that the birthmother had left the hospital and the baby boy was still in the NICU. I was told I needed to make a decision within a few hours as CPS would then take possession of the child if no one claimed

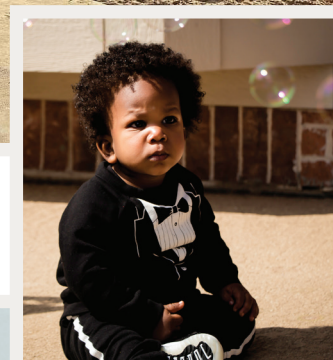
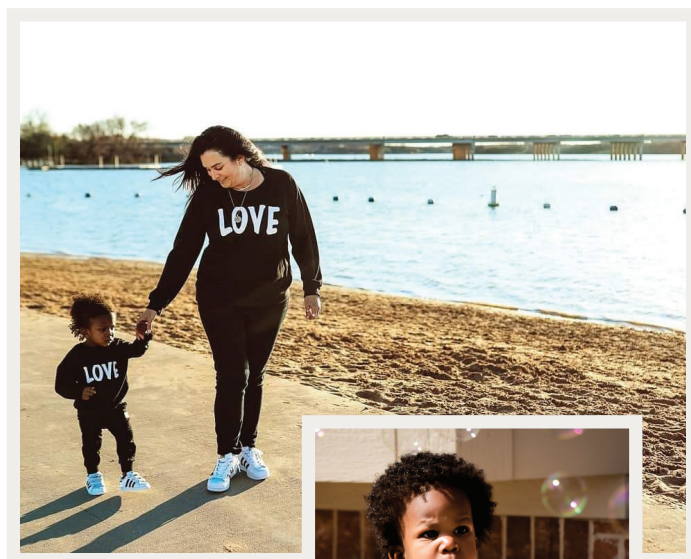
him. I had no idea what he looked like or what his health condition was, and I was worried that he hadn't been being held and loved for the last week. After having a minor panic attack, I was able to calm myself and make a decision. This was what I had been waiting for. I reminded myself this was my dream coming true and I needed to get it together. I called the staff and let them know I would be flying out and would arrive at the hospital the next day to meet my son. Once I made that decision, I got busy and booked my flight and a flight for my sister as well since she would be supporting me through this process. I booked a stay at a quaint B&B, and I was set to go meet my baby boy. I was overjoyed, nervous, and frantic all at once as I packed to go.

Meeting Hudson

I arrived at the hospital and felt so nervous as I had heard that bonding can be difficult with adoptive parents. I soon discovered how ridiculous that was and so far from the truth. He was so beautiful, and he was my son. I couldn't believe this was happening. My baby boy, Hudson, was here, and I had no words to describe the pure joy and gratitude I felt in that moment. The hospital staff was amazing. There had been volunteers working with Hudson and giving him snuggles and love the whole time. My fears were unfounded. One nurse helped me with the basics of caring for a baby and also shared her story of adopting her two children of a different race. One thing she said that I will never forget is that race and what we look like as a family never has mattered to them; they know love makes a home.

I later found out the birthmother had come back to the hospital just before I arrived. She came to sign the final papers relinquishing her rights over to me. She also wanted to spend a few minutes with Hudson and I am so happy she was able to have that special time with him. I gladly supported what she needed to do in order to process and feel a sense of peace. She had chosen a closed adoption, and I respect that; however, she is aware that if she ever wants more, my door is always open.

Once we left the hospital, my sister and I went straight to Walmart to buy the essentials we would need for Hudson while I awaited for ICPC to clear. I stayed in the car with Hudson while my sister did the shopping. It was at that moment, while I was alone and staring at Hudson, that it



all hit me at once. I was looking into his eyes, and he was looking into mine. This was it; we would be looking at each other for the rest of our lives. I was overwhelmed with love and gratitude. It was all surreal, and I couldn't believe just how perfect and tiny he was.

Our Loving Home

Hudson is growing faster than I can keep up with, and every time I look at him, I am reminded of how blessed I am. He is a happy and very active little guy who will be three years old this March. I can't even imagine life before Hudson, and I am delighted to continue to watch him thrive and grow into the person he is meant to be. I am so honored and proud to be a part of the adoption community, and it is my hope adoption gains more recognition for the miracle it is. It is my prayer and hope that by sharing my story, we begin to change the way adoption is perceived and honor those that want to adopt without having a partner because all that matters when it comes down to it is love. I am proof love truly does make a home.