



*our adoption story*

# SHAWNA & JOSHUA

## Pursuing Adoption

We longed for children to fill our home and looked forward to the day when that would become a reality. After trying to grow our family for some time, and with the help of fertility treatments, we began to surrender to the fact we might not be able to have biological children. We thought about doing IVF but ultimately decided that was not the path we wanted to take. Soon after, we began looking into our options for adoption. We had friends who were adopted, and through hearing their stories, we became excited to find a service provider to work with. We began doing our research and really didn't know where to start. We found it to be overwhelming and frustrating trying to find any good information out there on domestic infant adoption. During one last attempt to find information via Google, Shawna came across LifeLong's website and immediately called Joshua to share her findings. We made the decision to apply, and we eventually signed and began our two-year contract with LifeLong. We were so excited but so nervous as there was no guarantee we would even receive a placement. We knew in our hearts it would all work out, however, even if we didn't see just how it would yet.

We were very busy getting our profile together for the website and completing all the tasks for our home study. Our profile went out to four expectant mothers, and within a few days, we were getting a call that an expectant mother wanted to speak with us. We were in complete shock. We had made peace with the fact this would probably be a really long wait. This couldn't be happening so quickly, could it? We talked and decided we would love to move forward with getting to know this expectant mother. We immediately connected and found that what she and we were looking for within this relationship was virtually the same. She was six months pregnant when we started talking, and we were amazed to find out both she and her fiancé had picked us at separate times.

## Working with Our Expectant Mother

Over the next couple months, we would text regularly. We discussed what kind of communication she wanted after the baby was born and agreed on an open adoption. We all felt it was important this child know their birthmother and where they came from. She also expressed her desire to have us in the room with her when she gave birth, and we were deeply

honed and grateful to be included in such a vulnerable and miraculous event.

We made plans to fly out to her state once the doctor confirmed things were moving along. We did not want to miss the birth and of course wanted to show our support for the expectant mother as well. We decided to fly out to accompany her to one of her last doctor's appointments and to wait until the baby was ready to come. The day after her doctor's appointment, we made plans to go for a long walk to encourage labor, but when we picked her up, she decided it would be best if we just went straight to the hospital. Thank goodness she knew her body well because her water broke while we were in a hospital elevator.

She was given a room, and we both supported her as she gave birth to the most precious child we have ever known. Josh was able to cut the umbilical cord, and we watched in amazement as our child, our daughter, came earthside. Describing a moment such as this is incredibly difficult. We were overwhelmed with love and gratitude. This child being born was the single most amazing event of our lives. Shawna was able to hold her right away, doing skin to skin and taking in the precious first moments of her life. This was our daughter, and we were instantly in love. Little Audrey was now a part of our family and the reason for our intense joy.

We were lucky enough to have ICPC cleared and get back home with our precious baby girl the day before Thanksgiving. We couldn't think of anything to be more grateful for this holiday season and truly cannot believe the miracle of joy this tiny baby has given us.

## Reflections & Advice

Looking back at that November just two years ago, we are left speechless when thinking how everything came together so quickly. Audrey has filled our hearts and lives with so much joy.

Watching her grow and reach her milestones daily is such a gift. We know this child is right where she was supposed to be, and we couldn't love and adore her more. Our adoption story might not be the most typical situation; we realize that and feel very blessed it all went so smoothly and quickly. Although it was fast, it was not without challenges. There isn't a ton of in-depth information out there regarding adoption,



and we were surprised to find out that many of the medical staff were also unaware of the process. The logistics and legal side of things felt daunting and frustrating at times, but what was most difficult was navigating the relationship with the expectant mother—not knowing what to say or how to say it or thinking we might have said the wrong thing. It felt like we were walking on eggshells at times, not because the expectant mother made us feel that way but because we wanted to be respectful of her feelings as much as possible.

No matter what your adoption journey looks like, trust the process and really spend the time researching the technical and logistical side of the process. Consult an adoption attorney, and take your time finding an attorney you can trust. LifeLong was awesome, and the recommendations and advice we got from staff was crucial in making our process run smoothly. Be prepared for the unimaginable, and trust that everything happens for a reason. There is no doubt in our minds Audrey was meant to be in our family and be our daughter.