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"It's the size of your heart."

"Ever since I was little and I pictured my family, my dream was always a mini van and a house and lots of kids and being on the PTA and being a soccer mom," confessed Raquel Guerra-Luna, "And I am so blessed that I have exactly that right now, and it's all through adopting from foster care."

When Raquel, 34, and her wife, Crissel Guerra-Luna, 33, first shared their story two years ago, they had just begun the process of adopting a little boy and spoke eagerly of their hope to have more children through foster-adoption. Today, they are the proud parents of that boy, 5-year-old Andrew, and have been fostering siblings aged 1, 2, and 3-years old for almost a year. That mini van has become a necessity for this busy family!

Prior to their current set of siblings, the couple fostered three other placements. As much as they enjoy it, they've also been moved by how each time Andrew has happily embraced the role of big brother.

"Andrew loves them. Every single one that we've had he takes them under his wing," shared Raquel. "We don't know what's going to happen with this sibling set, but Andrew told us if they leave can we keep helping kids. He just has the biggest heart for this and that makes us happy. "

"He wants to get a school bus so we can help that many kids!" laughed Crissel.

"Yeah, we're really proud of him," added Raquel. "We kind of went back and forth thinking what is this gonna do to him because he's already been through the ringer himself. Is this doing more damage or maybe helping him? But he keeps asking for more and he takes every kid as his sibling, no questions asked, and when one leaves he asks for another one. He really has a big heart and he's a big helper."

Given how great the need is for people willing to foster, this pair appreciates the importance of educating others. They always volunteer to share their experience.

"Years ago, RaiseAChild recommended us to an agency called Five Acres. Now, we speak at their trainings for oncoming foster parents," said Raquel. "We like to answer questions, share our tips and tricks and our stories. We hope that people can hear multiple stories and hopefully see themselves in the story and see how attainable it is. Hopefully answering their questions helps dispel any fears that they might have."

“I think that the biggest question people ask is, ‘We don’t know if we have a big enough house or if we make enough money,’” Raquel continued. “We tell them when we first started we had a two-bedroom apartment. I was a stay-at-home parent; my wife was a full-time student who just got out of the military. And we’re doing it. Not a big income, not a big house, but we have a big enough heart. It doesn’t matter about your income or the size of your house or what job you have; it’s the size of your heart.”

They also recognize that simply being seen out in the world as a family sets a powerful example, especially for the LGBTQ community.

“I think there’s a stigma with gay couples that this can’t be done, but we try to encourage others,” said Crissel. “When we’re out at a restaurant with all our kids we do get stared at, but there’s a couple that ask and we tell them it’s doable, especially as a gay couple here in California. It’s amazing to have this opportunity.”

“We try not to hide, just be very out there in our daily lives. We’re very involved,” shared Raquel. “I’m on the PTO board at Andrew’s school. Crissel has coached two of Andrew’s soccer teams. We’re hoping we’re a billboard that we’re gay and we can do everything everyone else can, and answer questions along the way when people have them.”

While they acknowledge that fostering sometimes means saying goodbye, they insist on focusing instead on the difference they can make in a child’s life in whatever time they have together.

“I love the kids so much; it’s hard to see them go and worry, make sure they’re gonna be okay, be safe, loved, and all that,” admitted Crissel, “But we trust God has a good plan for their lives. Most of the kids we’ve had, they’re very quiet, very shy. They don’t want to play, they’re a little behind in speech or other things but with time, man, you should see them. It’s amazing. That’s what keeps us going.”

Most importantly, they’re grateful for all the gifts fostering continues to give them and how every day they continue to grow as a couple and a family.

“We were always very good with our communication in our relationship but this has helped us to communicate in other ways,” said Crissel. “We got handed a 3-year-old. As a couple we needed to figure it out really, really quick. We’re learning from each other and we’re learning from him too because of all the things he’s gone through. It’s been fun to see the change in us as a couple, as parents, and also the change in him.”

“I’m just so happy that I have my dream now and it’s all from adoption from foster care,” Raquel said. “I love it all. It’s hard but it’s everything I wanted and I’m so thankful to this process. Neither of us had the happy upbringing we’re providing

these kids. I'm so happy that we're able to have kids, to take care of and love kids through the trauma that they've experienced in their short little lives so far."

"We were talking about it the other day, having gone from all those bad experiences to having a Bachelor's degree and being able to adopt and have my little family. It's something that I never imagined could happen and I'm very thankful and overjoyed by it," added Crissel. "It's something we feel very strongly that we're called to do. It's extremely rewarding to see the kids who with time, with love and care and security, you see the change in them and that's what keeps us going. I think we needed each other. "