

## NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY



November 19, 2022 was National Adoption Day. A special symbol called the adoption triad (triangle intertwined with a heart) represents this special bond. The topmost part of the triad represents the adoptee, while the parents form the bottom corners. Continue reading below for three heart warming employee adoption experiences.

*"I LOVED YOU WITH ALL MY HEART."*



Tawanna always knew she wanted a family. To prepare for her new role as a mom, at age 28, Tawanna took classes which included a few of the key trainings taken at UCP Heartland e.g., CPR, Abuse and Neglect. Tawanna's excitement to adopt was so overwhelming, she purchased baby clothing before the process had begun. Tawanna shares that while understandable, there are barriers to adoption that are not considered with natural parenting, such as home assessments (childproofing the home), household income, court hearings, being in good health. Tawanna's advice to someone considering adoption, is to keep an open mind to the type of child you may receive and if it is something that you really want to do—fight for it, which is what she did for Tammy. Tawanna was at work when she got the call that literally changed her life over night. Her first night with Tammy was filled with all the wonderful anxieties of a new parent. Tammy is now a beautiful thriving artistic teenager who recently celebrated "Gotcha Day," for the first time with a 2nd ear piercing. Tawanna knew the moment she laid eyes on Tammy that she wanted to adopt her and she is forever grateful for the love and support she and Tammy received from Tawanna's parents. Tawanna hopes that she has been a role model for Tammy, who is well on her way to make her mark in this world.

*"YOU WERE WANTED AND MEANT TO BE HERE BECAUSE WE WANTED YOU."*

After meeting her then fiancé Randy, Lisa knew she wanted children. "One day, something speaks to you." "A child of my own." After several years of trying to conceive, Lisa and Randy looked into adoption and already had an idea of what was in store, as Lisa had talked with other parents who had adopted successfully. Lisa initially decided on an international adoption, which was a very slow process. Time waiting included the creation of a profile book for prospective parents to view, along with the building anticipation of one day having a child. Nine years after marrying their lives were forever changed. Lisa and Randy became parents to brother and sister, Wesley, and Ginny. Their first night for Lisa and Randy were filled with both calm and nervous excitement, for which the baby monitor helped. Adopting as a married couple meant also having discussions regarding parenting styles. Lisa's advice if you're considering adoption is, "Don't be afraid to do it." "It is so special seeing their face for the first time." Wesley and Jennie, are young adults now and both are musically inclined, playing the piano and drums; and Marimba in the marching band, respectively. The Maledys don't specifically celebrate "Gotcha Day," but do spend time with family during the holidays.



*"I AM HAPPY TO HAVE YOU. THIS IS A SAFE PLACE AND YOU ARE LOVED."*



Latasha went into the foster care system two days before her 7th birthday, along with her siblings. Her first group home was a welcome change with attentive adults and resources, but also bullying and stealing of a few personal items she was allowed to bring with her that connected her to her home. Having transitioned through 2 foster homes, Latasha realized that each had its benefits and barriers. One nurtured her creativity, had structure, and is where she met her first best friend, Natalie. While the other made her feel a part of the family, included, understood, and seen. She experienced her first drive-in movie, had a bike, and felt loved. Despite these privileges, neither was home. Latasha remembers her dad, while illiterate, fighting for custody and winning. Home and love were with him, but there was still more love out there that belonged to Latasha. And, after years of searching, she was able to complete the picture, and be reunited with her mom and siblings she'd been missing for 26 years. Life ultimately worked itself out! "You are not what you have been through," is what she wants people to understand. Little Latasha would be happy to see who she is today. Her life experiences have made her, "loving and kind, curious, and an advocate for forever homes for youths in need." There is hope and life on the other side.