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Student Spotlight

March 2017

The Emery Family Carson City, NV



When speaking with Melanie Emery about her children, she lights up and you can feel the enormous amount of love, pride and protection she has for them. The three children she calls her “forever children” today were adopted through the foster care system – all of them siblings who were in need of a safe and nurturing home environment. Melanie and her husband Nick have given them that – and so much more.

With no biological children of their own, Melanie and Nick felt called to become foster parents several years ago while residing in California. They soon welcomed into their home a young pair of siblings, Neveah and Grace, who were only 2 and 1 years old at the time. The sisters had a difficult start in life and were in need of love, security and extra care – all things that the Emerys were more than able and willing to provide. Eighteen months later, the Emery family was overjoyed when the girls became their “forever daughters” after finalizing their adoption. Eventually, a son named Josiah, Neveah and Grace’s biological baby brother, would join their family.

Shortly after they adopted Neveah and Grace, the family moved to Carson City, Nevada, where Nick began to serve as a senior pastor of a local church. Although the girls were very young when they came to live with Melanie and Nick and were thriving in their care, they still carried some of the after effects from their previous life. Realizing what an important role she would play in helping the children to overcome any scars from the past, Melanie devoted her time to caring for her children and ensuring their needs were met. And as the girls grew older, those needs included making sure they were able to learn in a safe environment that would help them grow and reach their full potential.

Unfortunately, Melanie soon learned that the school they were zoned for was among the lowest performing schools in the area. Their oldest daughter, Neveah, was scheduled to start Kindergarten that year and Melanie was worried that the environment would not be suited to her needs, not just academically, but socially and emotionally as well given her history. However, with seemingly no other choice, they decided to give the school a chance. But when they brought Neveah to school on the first day of Kindergarten, they were shocked to learn that she had 37 children in her class – nearly double the amount of children in a typical or recommended class size for Kindergarten. Melanie worried that she would digress in a class this large and that the teacher would not be able to give her the individualized attention she desperately needed. Her worries became reality when, after only a few weeks in the class, Neveah began to feel overwhelmed, stressed and overstimulated at school.

Fearing the long-term negative impact this would have on Neveah's progress, both in school and at home, Melanie and Nick knew they would need to make a change. While searching for their options, they learned that their family qualified for the Nevada Educational Choice Scholarship Program through the AAA Scholarship Foundation, enabling them to choose a school environment that would meet their children's learning needs and easing their financial worries.

With the help from the AAA Scholarship Foundation, the Emery family found the right academic setting for Neveah in a local private school, and eventually her younger sister Grace joined her there, also on a AAA scholarship. With its smaller class sizes and family-like environment, the Emerys feel confident in the choice they have made in their children's education.

"I love how the teachers and administrators know our daughters' stories and background, and are able to offer the individualized attention and care that they need," Melanie says. "Our girls are thriving in an environment that provides them with the education they need to succeed, while reinforcing the morals and character qualities that we try to instill at home."

Now in the second grade, Neveah is excelling – academically, socially and emotionally. She is making all A's in her classes and even taking piano lessons. Grace, currently in the first grade, is also making all A's in her classes and even reading above grade level and moving on to more advanced work.

The scholarships have eased the Emerys' minds and helped them to be able to focus on their children, as well as their passion for helping others in the foster care system. Going through the foster care and adoption process themselves, and recognizing the overwhelming need for children to have a voice, Melanie and Nick became volunteers with the Carson City area CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), an organization that provides trained volunteers to act as liaisons for the children involved in child welfare cases in the court system in an effort to get them the best possible help and outcome.

Seeing firsthand the positive outcome the right environment can have on a child – whether at home or at school – they are determined to make a difference for more children like their own.

"To make such a profound impact in just one child's life, that makes it all worth it," Melanie says. "The AAA Scholarship Foundation and its amazing donors are making a huge difference for my family, and through these wonderful programs, corporations have the ability to help so many more families, from all walks of life and from various parts of our country. The end result – better educated youth that grow into successful adults – benefits us all."

About AAA Scholarship Foundation

The AAA Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships solely to qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 85 percent of AAA scholarships are distributed to children at or below 185 percent of poverty. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and care about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They wish to change their child's learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a tax credit (dollar-for-dollar in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada, and up to 90 percent in Pennsylvania). The AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only approved Scholarship 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations exclusively serving qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students through these Scholarship Tax Credit programs. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single-solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit www.AAAScholarships.org, or contact Kerri Vaughan at kerri@aaascholarships.org or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.