

## Meet the Finkbeiner Family

After observing their friends hosting children through the Safe Families program, Justin and Brooke Finkbeiner felt drawn to the mission of helping families who were going through a difficult time. They liked the idea of hosting children while also supporting the parent, usually the mother, who was taking initiative to seek counseling, rehabilitation, employment, or housing for the benefit of her family.

In the interview below, the Brooke gives insight into how hosting a child affected her family's perspective and vision for serving others.



Celebrating a birthday together

Left to Right: Brooke, Baileigh, Trace, Brady, Justin, Eli, Drew

## Tell us about one child that you hosted. What was the experience like?

We knew of a mom who was struggling and could benefit from Safe Families while she got back on her feet. She had a 4 year-old girl, Baileigh, who would need a place to stay while her mom went through a drug rehabilitation program. We talked with the mother, and she agreed that working with Safe Families would benefit her family. We sensed the dire need for support that Baileigh and her mother had, so we jumped in and said yes to our first hosting experience, without knowing what to expect.



The Finkbeiner Family and Baileigh

The adjustment time took a little time for our family, but it also strengthened us. We came together to serve in ways we had never known before.

We learned so much from the difficulties this family endured in order to start down a path of healing. I know that we are not the heroes here – the mother is truly the hero for taking the brave step of asking for help and allowing us to walk with her through the process of recovery.

Because Baileigh had the routine, structure, safety, normalcy, and love she needed, Mom was able to

complete her eight month stay in rehab. We had the honor of seeing her recover from addiction, and we saw Baileigh grow, flourish, and become so brave and strong. It was a beautiful story that unfolded before our eyes. My son, Eli, is the same age as Baileigh, and he was the bridge between us and Baileigh in the early days of her stay. He made her feel so comfortable so quickly – I think he's a bit of a hero too. Soon our entire family formed a unique and tight bond with Baileigh and her mom, and they are still both a part of our life today.

### What were the benefits or joys of being a host family?

There are too many to name. Our family is forever changed by our hosting experience and the bond we have with Baileigh and her mom. We saw the Holy Spirit and the love of Christ at work in so many ways, and that joy and benefit is unmatched.

### What were the challenges of being a host family?

Hosting was difficult at first – mostly because we felt so sad for Baileigh. She was pulled away from everything she knew. We were challenged to learn her personality and fears, as well as what she needed and when. Our boys had to adjust to another child in the home, which included the attention of mom and dad shifting to Baileigh's needs a little more.

### What did God teach you though hosting?

We learned a lot about the difficult situations that people encounter, and how a mother's decision to let us take care of her child during this difficult time requires so much strength, trust, and love.

God also taught us to listen to the needs of those around us, and if we are able to say yes and help someone in a tangible way, then go ahead and do it.

We learned to let go of the "what ifs" or fears and just do what we know is right. And in doing that, our eyes were opened to so much more. We've learned to look outwardly at needs around us more, rather inwardly at our own needs.

### Get Involved

Safe Family needs volunteers like you! If you're interested in learning more about Safe Families and discovering what involvement could look like for you, please visit [milwaukee.safe-families.org/involvement](http://milwaukee.safe-families.org/involvement)

*Written by Stephanie Strang  
September 5, 2016*



The Finkbeiner Family heading to an event