

Meet Matt and Laura Rostermundt

Matt and Laura Rostermundt are passionate about parenting. After a year of waiting to adopt, Matt's brother made a suggestion that piqued their interest: What about caring for children through Safe Families?

Matt and Laura looked into the organization, enrolled as a host family, and knew after the first placement that they were in the right place at the right time for families who needed it most. "Safe Families is a proactive approach to foster care," said Laura. "There's such a need for families, especially single moms, to have this respite care."



Matt, Laura, and a Safe Families child (6 months), enjoying a summer afternoon.

Matt and Laura recognize that hosting children short term (up to one year) through Safe Families can prevent them from entering into the state run foster care system, which is often emotionally traumatic and difficult to exit without losing parental rights. The ultimate goal with Safe Families is reunification of a family," said Laura. It's an initiative the Rostermundts are proud to be a part of.

They have hosted six children through four placements so far, and they continue to support families as placements for children are needed. Though Matt and Laura have undoubtedly made personal sacrifices, they describe the single mothers, who are often earning an income below the federal poverty line, as the true heroes.

"These moms recognize their need for support while they face crisis situations such as managing chronic or acute health conditions, seeking emotional health treatment, finding employment, or securing stable housing," Laura explained. "They're only one step away from everything crashing in...but they took the first step and have the courage and drive to make themselves better parents and people. They know we're here to support them and keep their children safe and comfortable."

Laura knows her relationship with a mother plays a critical role in supporting the family, and she sometimes communicates multiple times a day with a mother to share how a child is doing, receive advice that only Mom would know, or offer encouragement to a woman bravely working toward her personal and family goals.

Over time, Matt and Laura have realized that every placement situation is unique, and their consistent love and parenting style (including many "teachable moments") has an impact that is greater than they could have imagined. Their support for Safe Families children has taken unexpected forms, including finding clothes and a winter coat for a child or receiving regular phone calls from a seven year old girl who "just wanted to talk" after her stay with Matt and Laura. These instances are reminders that in addition to providing a safe and caring home, Matt and Laura are changing lives through their love.



"They bring us a lot of joy and we give them a lot of love," Laura said. "I don't know why it took us so long to get involved."

Matt and Laura continue to host children, support mothers, and share their experience with anyone interested in Safe Families. "Learn more about it," encouraged Laura. "It's amazing what a group of passionate volunteers can do for families who need and deserve this care."

Get Involved

Safe Family needs volunteers like you! If you're interested in learning more about Safe Families and what involvement could look like for you, please visit milwaukee.safe-families.org/involvement and contact Heather Webb at hwebb@safefamilies.net.

*Written by Stephanie Strang
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