

## Meet the Walker Family

Jerod and Joanne Walker live in Germantown with their six children: Nathan (16), Janaya (14), Janessa (14), Nolan (12), Janica (8), and Janora (1).

Jerod and Joanne have always enjoyed children and looked into being a foster family through the state; however the amount of training required was difficult to imagine considering their busy schedules. When they discovered Safe Families for Children, they connected with the mission and knew it was the right fit for their lives.



**The Walker Family:** Janaya, Nathan, Jerod, Nolan, Janora, Janica, Joanne, and Janessa

The Walker family has hosted two energetic boys through Safe Families; Jonny (2½) and Ryan (10 mo), providing their mothers with the time and space to secure employment and housing. In the interview below, the Walker family explains, in their own words, what hosting children through Safe Families has been like for them and what they've learned through the experience.

## What was it like to host a child through Safe Families?

**Joanne:** Both boys fit into our family and did well. The first child we hosted, Jonny, was with us for 3 months. The second child we hosted, Ryan, was with us for 3 ½ weeks. During Ryan's stay, we texted with his mom daily, and she was very grateful we could give him a safe home, full of love. Ryan went back to his mom after she was able to secure housing and a job. It was good to see them reunited and to be a part of their story – we still connect with them every week.

**Janessa (14):** I'm thinking of Jonny, the first child we hosted for three months. He was a sweet little boy who always put a smile on your face! The experience was a real eye-opener for me. We hear about children who don't know when they will get something to eat or may not have a roof over their heads. When I actually met a child who was possibly in that situation, I formed a whole new perspective on things. Right away, I knew I would happily do this again.

**Janica (8):** I'm thinking of Ryan, the second child we hosted. I liked it but then I didn't then at the end I did because I missed him a lot. Yes, I enjoyed it.

## What were some joys of being a host family?

**Joanne:** We've had awesome support from our neighbors, family, and church family who want to help when we're hosting. It's been great to see so many people come together to make a difference. Also, it's a joy to see the compassion and love in our own children. They consider Safe Families their own ministry. They welcomed both boys with open arms, and they're ready to do it again!

**Janaya (14):** I enjoyed playing with the kids and knowing that I'm helping a mom or dad.



**Nolan (12):** I like meeting new kids.

**Janica (8):** I like knowing I'm helping someone and enjoying it.

### **What were some challenges when you were hosting a child?**

**Janessa (14):** The kids would wake us up at night, which made me and my sister tired. Also, it was hard when they left, but exciting to know they'd go back to their families with a better situation.

**Janaya (14):** Waking up with Ryan in the middle of a school night was hard.

**Janica (8):** It was hard watching them leave and when they were loud. But I still liked them!

### **What has God taught you through your experiences with hosting children?**

**Joanne:** God has really opened my eyes to the needs and struggles of the mothers Safe Families helps. In one case, our church friends and neighbors helped furnish a mother's apartment after she found housing, and we still support and encourage her.

**Janessa (14):** I thought I was thankful and grateful before, but I was nowhere close to being as thankful as I should have been.

**Janaya (14):** You get rewarded for helping but that's not the best part. The best part is helping.



**The Walker family and Jonny**

**Janica (8):** That I should be nice even if Jonny is being annoying because once he is gone, I'll miss him.

### **Get Involved**

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[milwaukee.safe-families.org/involvement](http://milwaukee.safe-families.org/involvement)

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