

Adoption is a Journey



The Arulampalam Family

Liza Arulampalam and her husband, Mayor of Hartford, Arunan Arulampalam always knew they wanted a big family. Even before they met, each felt a calling to adopt.

"While we both wanted four kids, although now we have five, I didn't ever feel compelled to have all of the kids biologically," explained Liza.

The couple now have five children, ranging in age, two biological and three adoptive.

"Adoption is a journey and, in any parenting journey, there are difficult things and there are some really great things. Through some of those tough emotional experiences you build a really strong bond [with your children and others in the adoption community]."

Arunan and Liza said one of the joys one of that parenting journey is watching their children grow and develop their own personalities and talents.

"One of the fun things about building your family through adoption is, as your kids get older, they come out with these talents. For example, our oldest daughter is an extremely fast track runner...a talent that neither of us possess," Liza laughs. "These things happen and you're like 'wow what an amazing surprise' because they clearly did not get that from me."



"It's this joy and gift to see the person they become as you walk alongside them. It's a little bit from you, because our kids do copy and mimic us, but then there's this whole other set of DNA. It's just a really cool thing to discover."

Arunan said people ask him all the time if the couple feels differently towards their biological children versus their adopted children. He said neither he nor Liza feel that way - your children are your children.

"It's such a beautiful thing to see five kids all of whom have completely different DNA and different talents, abilities and skills and all of whom are equally special, equally loved and equally important in our family."

Arunan and Liza fostered and eventually adopted through CT DCF. The CT DCF Foster Care Division offers comprehensive support and training to all licensed caregivers to ensure they are

not alone on this journey. The Arulampalams felt that support throughout the process. They also built a strong relationship with their social workers and the other parents completing the licensing and training.

"We did our training through DCF and felt really well trained and well prepared. The social workers become like family to you," Liza said. "When you first start the process it could feel a little scary."

Liza remembers scrambling to pick up and tidy the house so she would not feel judged by the social workers assigned to her family.



"But as you go into the process you realize your DCF social workers are such good people. They are on your side. They just want what's best you, for your child, for your child's biological family. And they're not judging you. They're here to help and we felt so cared for throughout the entire process."

Arunan agreed, "We love our social workers from DCF. They made such a huge impact in our lives. We had some of the best, most hard-working folks. We still talk to our social workers and have them on our Christmas card list."



"We have gotten so much support and so much love through DCF. They're just incredible."

From initial orientation to ongoing support, there will be help from DCF every step of the way to ensure that caregivers in training have the resources and assistance they need to provide the best possible care for their foster child.

"The training was incredibly valuable. You go through several weeks of training and build a real community with the parents going through it with you. We're still in a Facebook group with those parents, we still share our joys and our lows together," Arunan said.

"The level of training, and for the real scenarios you're going to face, is phenomenal. You're never prepared for parenthood, but we felt as prepared as we could be to be foster and eventually adoptive parents."

The Arulampalams encouraged others to open their hearts and homes to children in need of permanency and stability.

"[Fostering and adoption] has been an incredible way for us to build our family. It's a joy we hope other get to experience as well."

The Arulampalam family also appeared on the DCF monthly WFSB Great Day at 9a segment to talk about their journey: <https://www.wfsb.com/video/2024/11/25/national-adoption-day/>



While reunification remains DCF's primary goal if a child cannot remain safely at home, over 1,043 youth who have achieved permanency so far this year with adoption being one form of permanency. Since January 2020, the overall number of children in the care and custody of CT DCF has been reduced by approximately 25 percent with over 2,794 children safely being reunified.

As National Adoption Month comes to a close, DCF will have completed nearly 350 adoptions this calendar year in addition to reunifying almost 470 children and facilitating 224 children achieving permanency through a transfer of guardianship. In

the last five years, over 6,500 children have reached permanency which includes 2,794 reunifications, 1,608 transfers of guardianship and 2,123 adoptions.

Ready to become an adoptive or foster parent and make a difference in the life of a child?

Learn more about the process, ask questions, and take the first step toward making that difference by calling 1-888-KID-HERO or visiting ctfosters.com.