



Family Renewal Initiative

www.familyrenewalinitiative.org

Bimonthly Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 1

February 2024

A Client Says "Thank You"

My name is Tia. I am soon to be 26 years old, with 2 daughters, ages 4 and 2 years old. At the time I reached out to the Family Renewal Initiative, I was a single mom with little to no support and in need of life changing surgery. I had been waiting for this surgery to be approved by my insurance since I was 17 years old. Now that I was approved, I wasn't 17 any longer and had the responsibility of my children to consider, not just myself. I had no one to watch my daughters while I had the surgery, or while I was in recovery for four to six weeks afterwards. I would not be able to pick up anything very heavy and my youngest child is still in diapers, so I worried how I would be able to manage everything I was facing. Both of my girls have sensory issues and special needs so making sure they are cared for is my number

one priority. I have always held off taking care of anything medical with myself. Head Start told me about FRI and at first, I was wary about leaving my kids with a strange family and the fact that I have never been away from my children for two days scared me a little. I then met the host mom who came and talked with me a couple times, getting to know one another, interacting with my children and I. Then I met her, her husband, and her daughter, when we filled out the paperwork and all the worries lifted off my shoulders. They were the kindest and most understanding people I have ever met. They took my girls in (hosted them) for 30 days while I had surgery and during recovery. My much-needed surgery went great. Recovery was a bit rough, being away from my girls, but they were taken care of, loved and

taught all kinds of new things. I was able to talk to them regularly through video, phone and a visit mid recovery. My oldest now says prayer before every meal and before bed, something she learned from her host family. She still talks about the family months later. This family really was a

blessing from up above. FRI has done many other things for me. Another sweet family let me borrow their car for the girls' doctor appointments and this past Christmas another family blessed us with gifts and food. I'm forever grateful for the Family Renewal Initiative program.



THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELPED US EXCEED THE \$20,000 MATCHING GRANT AT THE END OF 2023.

Introducing FRI's Newest Board Member—Mike Cushwa

I recently joined the Board of FRI at the end of 2023. I am honored and humbled to be in this position with an organization that is so dear to my family's heart.

FRI is an organization which my family and I love deeply. We have served as an FRI host family essentially since the program began, in the summer of 2022. We have always had a collective heart for, and spiritual gift of, hospitality. Before joining FRI, and throughout the first 20+ years of our marriage, we hosted friends, family, neighbors, and exchange students in our home for days, weeks, or even months at a time. For most of this time, we lived in various locations all over the world while I served in the U.S. Army.

Having grown up in the Eastern Panhandle, I was excited when my wife, Christy-Ann, suggested that we move back to this area as I began the transition of retiring from the Army. We continued

to feel God's call on our lives to be hospitable, so we made sure our new home would have an extra bedroom for that purpose. We considered foster care initially, and then learned about FRI through our church, Independent Bible Church, in Martinsburg. We want Deuteronomy 10:18 to sum up our family mission, "He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing." (NKJV) We completed the excellent training given by the Director, Illona Roman, and hosted our first child for the month of August 2022. We were FRI's first host family! Though the experience was brief, I will just say it was intense! The issues this little girl was dealing with, and her resulting persona shockingly awakened us to the dire needs of many just like her in our Eastern Panhandle community.

About two months after our first hosting, FRI

called us again to take in a 2 ½ year old set of twin girls, one of whom had significant medical needs. FRI told us we would likely have them for two to six weeks, while their mother underwent some medical treatment. Though initially a little intimidated by twins and medical needs, we prayed and jumped in. Within minutes of meeting those sweet girls, God began unfolding an amazing story which he allowed us to be a part of.

The girl with medical needs had the same rare disease which our now-17-year-old son had when he was a baby. Well, two to six weeks turned into 14 ½ months. Over the course of that time, God used us to provide a stable, loving home, and the time for each of those girls to get their special needs addressed – including their spiritual needs. Fairly early in their stay, as we would approach or pass IBC on Route 9, one of

the girls would yell out in the car, "Yay, Church!"

We are so grateful for the love and support of our church community, FRI leaders and family helpers, and loving neighbors, who all pitched in to love on these girls over this time.

God has used FRI to stretch us out of our comfort zone and has increased our faith and trust in Him as a result. We have prayed specifically and watched God answer and provide, even for needs we didn't know we had many times. God has given us more than we could possibly give away. We have been able to involve our whole family and many people around us in hometown missions. It is my heartfelt prayer that God will call many more families and individuals to support the vital mission of FRI. I am grateful for the opportunity to be on the board and look forward to serving in this role.

Please pray with us that the ministry of Family Renewal Initiative would grow in 2024!!!!

Want to join our prayer team??? Send an email to info@familyrenewalinitiative.org asking to join the prayer team and receive monthly updates!!!!

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