

Best Foster Parent

**Nominee: MRS. ENGRACIA DAYRIT AND MR. ARNOLD DAYRIT
(POSTHUMOUS RECOGNITION)**

Love unconditionally given to an innocent soul will eventually be reciprocated with even bigger happiness.

The Foster Parents

Arnold and Engracia were married in their early 40s. Engracia is a daycare worker in Guagua, Pampanga for 28 years while Arnold is a retired engineer. With their middle-adult age, both are not expecting to bear their biological children.

For 28 years, Engracia has been surrounded by children with different personalities. With all the fun and love she shares with them at a daycare center, Engracia feels affection for kids in general.

Arnold, who is often left alone in their house, has been wanting to spend time taking care of a child. Both of them wanted to share the love they have with a child they can call their own. This is why they decided to give foster parenting a try.

The Foster Child

Lyory Ann was abandoned by her biological father and was admitted to the Department of Social Welfare and Development in 2010 for temporary shelter. She was supposed to be reintegrated into her biological mother, but the latter signed a deed of voluntary commitment.

As she grew older, she was observed to be stubborn, unruly, and disrespectful. She would often have her meltdown and with a lack of focused parental attention, she became hard to control.

The Forming of a Family

Lyory Ann was 4 years old when she was introduced to the Dayrit family for temporary rehoming in 2013. It was a big adjustment for both the couple and the child. The couple was faced with handling tantrums as if Lyory Ann was sizing them up on how committed they are.

Engracia continues to perform as a daycare worker while Arnold is more focused on taking care of Lyory Ann. He regularly takes her to school and fetches her back home. He is also the one preparing all she needs for school late in the evening.

Engracia always reminds Lyory Ann that she is blessed with two mothers. Every time they visit the DSWD Center for reporting, with her biological mother, she always initiates to tell ann to go to her mom and ask for her hand to bless and hug her – which she does.

For Engracia, parenting should not be a form of competition. She never taught Lyory to compare them as parents and plant grudges against her mother.

For this, Engracia shares how she remembers Lyory's biological mother, "noong una kaming magkita, sinabi ko kay Lyory na mag-bless at yakapain ang nanay nya. Nakita ito ng mother nya kaya kagaad magaan ang loob niya sakin. Nung huli naming pagkikita, ramdam ko na pinagkakatiwalaan talaga niya ako sa anak nya – 'yung dalawang kamay talaga niyang ipahkakatiwala ito sa akin," she said.

The New Person

From being difficult, Lyory Ann is now a kinder, responsible person. Engracia notes that she is very proud of herself for raising a good daughter like Lyory. "Ang pina-proud ako na ituro sa kanya ay 'yung pag-gamit niya ng 'po' at 'opo'. Noon kasi, wala talaga, parang ka-edad lang niya 'yung kausap niya. Ngayon kahit pagalitan at pagsabihan mo, nag-po-po parin siya,

nagugulat nga ako minsan. Kahit na sumagot siya para magpaliwanag, magalang parin,” she shared.

Lyory Ann is also observed to be kind to her peers. According to Engracia, she shared their food with her playmates that has no food, “minsan pag-uwi ko wala na ‘yung hinanda ko, tapos sasabihin niya ‘ma, ‘wag ka na magalit, binigay ko sa kanila kasi wala silang pagkain.’ she shared while laughing, “sana anak magtira ka naman para sa atin.”

The Loss

In the year 2017, Arnold Dayrit suffered from a heart attack and sadly passed away. This life situation was a great challenge both to Engracia and Lyory. Lyrory was very close to her father. Until now, she recalls memories with Arnold, “Ma, kung nandito si papa sinundo ka namin sa work mo tapos habang naghihintay binili na niya ako ng pag-kain,” Engracia recalls Lyory reminiscing.

“Araw-araw po noon akong umiiyak,” said Engracia. “Napakahirap talaga. Mabait si Arnold. Ni minsan hindi kami nag-away. Siya ‘yung tipong tao na makikita mong tahimik kapag may kagalit kaya ayaw na ayaw talaga niya ng ganoon,” she added.

The Gift

Engracia said that during that time, she saw immense strength from Lyory. She draws out courage from her to carry on. It was that time when she thought she needed Lyory more than Lyory needed them. Sometimes, people think that in Foster Parenting, the benefit is always towards the children but Engracia proves that the benefit and positive impact is two-way.

“Sabi ni Arnold na ituloy ko raw ang pagpapagawa ng bahay para may matirhan kami na maayos na aming anak. Ginawa ko lahat ‘yun – tinuloy ko,” she recalls.

The Mission

Many are inspired to see them as one strong family and were encouraged to try fostering too. As a daycare worker, Engracia always promotes foster care advocacy with her colleagues and with other parents. She always finds time to share their story with others, leaving testimonials, and being active in every program of the agency regarding foster care. She is the Pampanga Provincial Representative of the Regional Foster and Adoption Support Group (FASG).

This is how Engracia contributes to further the mission of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Love is the gift that overflows when given away.

Story by: Lorenzo Mendigorin

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