



## HOSTING ELIJAH HAS BEEN SUCH A WONDERFUL GIFT!

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ON FEBRUARY 12, 2016

POSTED IN [KIDSAVE STORIES](#), [LA COUNTY - HOST & ADOPT](#), [NEWS](#), [WEEKEND MIRACLES](#)

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Hosting a Kidsave Kid doesn't just change their life—it can change yours, too. Through Kidsave's [Weekend Miracles program](#), the Galinis Family began hosting Elijah in November 2015. Caroline Galinis shared her experience with us here:



*Hosting Elijah has been such a wonderful gift!*

He has become an extension of our family and a big brother to our younger children—our two toddlers ask about him when he's not around and look forward to him coming over (they constantly say, "Where Ly-Jah?").

We've seen Elijah almost every weekend since being matched with him in November, and have done all sorts of activities: attending my office Christmas party, participating in a charity run, going to the zoo, spending the day at Knott's Berry Farm, having ice cream in Little Tokyo, opening presents on Christmas day together and just enjoying family time at the house!

Kidsave, unlike other "mentorship" programs, doesn't utilize blind matching. Instead, Kidsave lets adults and kids meet each other (with no commitment!) and organically develop sincere bonds with them. Kidsave is also wonderful because it isn't forced: there's no requirement to become a host at the first event you attend, and interested adults can come to meetings for as long as they'd like without being pressured to "match" right away! Kidsave advocates for children to have meaningful connections with caring, reliable adults. While adoption is amazing and definitely a goal of Kidsave's, there's no pressure for hosts to adopt. Without this pressure, which can scare people away from programs involving older foster youth, adults can make meaningful and natural connections with kids they truly care about.

We're not in a position in our lives to adopt a teenager, but have a huge heart for older foster youth. We believe that every child deserves a family, and just because we aren't in the place to become an adoptive family to Elijah doesn't mean we can't bring him into our lives as an extension of our family through Kidsave. We've always dreamed of having a large family, and Elijah is part of that dream. When he comes to our house, he seems to see our house as a second "home" and a safe place to unwind and spend his time—which is exactly how we want him to feel! He helps himself to food and drinks in the fridge, makes his way around the house as if it's his own, and tells us when "we" need more milk. Our friends and co-workers all know Elijah and expect him at events that we attend. Hosting is such an amazing experience because we get to be parents, friends, mentors, advisors, teachers, and family all in one!

Whenever I'm describing the Kidsave program to people, I say this: As you became a young adult, who did you call to ask how to write your first check? Or how to pay your water bill for your first apartment? Or what to do when your car was making "that funny sound"? You called your parents. But imagine if you had no parents to call. Who would teach you those things? That's what we want to be for Elijah – someone he can call with those questions; someone he can turn to for advice; someone he can rely on to be there, even when nobody else is.

We often talk with Elijah about his plans to join the military, how important it is for him to graduate high school, etc. When we talk about things like the day he'll leave for boot camp talked or the day he'll graduate, he asks us "Will you be there?"—and every single time, I tell him "YES! YES! YES!" I don't care where in the world we are... we will be there for the big accomplishments in his life. That's a big promise, especially to a foster youth, but I would never make it if I didn't mean it with 100% sincerity. It's so important for Elijah to know that we've got his back and will be there to support him and cheer him on as he makes his way in the world. Everybody deserves a support network in this world, and that's what we hope to be for Elijah.

To become a Weekend Miracles host, contact Jessica or Lauren at [jessicap@kidsave.org](mailto:jessicap@kidsave.org) | [lauren@kidsave.org](mailto:lauren@kidsave.org) OR call 310-642-7283.

Kidsave's Vision is a world where every child is nurtured from birth, where the loss of human potential due to neglect is absent, and where people everywhere care enough that all children, even those abandoned, grow up in stable, loving families.

**Together let's move 1 million children into families and lasting connections with adults by 2020.**

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