



CHAMPION

Fall 2022

For the Leahey
family, adoption
is **everything**





November is National Adoption Month, and caring donors like **you** are helping UMFS connect children and teens in foster care with their forever families. The Leaheys are one of those families.

Foster care and adoption were on Katherine Leahey's heart since she was a bright-eyed highschooler. But little did she know that while attending prom and studying for her next big test, a baby boy, who would eventually become her adoptive son, was also being welcomed into the world.

As an adult, Katherine pursued a career in social work, and adoption and foster care continued to be on her mind. Katherine knew firsthand the number of youth in foster care as she received calls from work about children who needed permanent homes. During those instances, her husband Patrick would optimistically chime in, "Well, they should just come here!"

Katherine knew it wasn't so simple. Yet the heartstrings kept pulling.

The Leaheys reflected on how they wanted to grow their family. At 24-years old, full of energy and passion, the couple signed up for an information session with UMFS.

"Adoption is our family."

What started out as a compassionate curiosity quickly turned into a big-hearted reality. The Leaheys were approved as foster parents in 2016, and in April of 2017, nine-year old, Harry Potter-loving Mitchell moved in with them. The adoption was finalized nearly two years later. Soon after, the "Leahey three" became four, with the adoption of their daughter Bella in 2021.

The moment the Leaheys met Mitchell

and Bella as children in foster care at UMFS, Katherine and Patrick knew the roots of their family were growing.

Katherine shared that "from day one you feel like, 'This is my kid. This is forever.'"

UMFS' role throughout the foster care and adoption process can be summed it up in two words: unwavering support.

Caring donors like **you** are the foundation of forever families.

Your assistance shows up in every possible way, from dedicated social workers who go above and beyond every single day to classes for adoptive parents and parent support groups.



After Mitchell's adoption finalized, the Leahey's surprised him with his first plane trip. The family visited the sunny beaches of Florida and explored Harry Potter World at Universal Studios, a highlight for the tween who had read the series three times through. And after Bella was adopted, to Disney they went again. The trips have become somewhat of an ongoing joke, with Mitchell and Bella asking their parents to adopt more kids, so they can keep going to Disney.

"Adoption is our family," said Katherine. "It's holding space for the weight of this child who was not always a part of my life. And now, they will always be a part of my life."

For the Leaheys, adoption has given them everything. **Your support today** can help more families in Virginia find each other.

"What's so cool and unique about our family is that none of us share the same DNA. And at one point, none of us shared the same last name. Now, we all do." ●



To make a donation to help more children find their forever families, visit [UMFS.org/donate](https://umfs.org/donate). To learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent, visit [UMFS.org/foster](https://umfs.org/foster).

Special thanks to Sara Maslyn Photography for the Leahey family photos.

Be a Champion for Students with Specialized Education Needs

Your kindness today gives them the tools they need to thrive

Your gift to the UMFS Be a Champion campaign will furnish ten new classrooms at the UMFS Charterhouse School. The classrooms are designed to provide therapeutic and individualized education for students who are experiencing mental health and behavioral challenges that are rooted in trauma.

Caring donors like **you** helped us to break ground on an addition to Charterhouse School in September, and **we need your help** to furnish the classrooms with technology and supplies that are made for youth with specialized education needs.

Your **compassionate support** will make a tremendous impact in the lives of students who are healing from traumatic experiences and don't want to fall behind in their learning.

Learn more and make your gift today at [UMFS.org/campaign](https://umfs.org/campaign).

