The Best Joy You Can Experience: Teen Brothers Adopted Amid Pandemic

Jason and Kelly Noling both came from very big families. Their parents had multiple siblings, and there were always plenty of aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandkids around. When it came time to start their own family, they had discussions on whether or not they wanted to move forward with natural childbirth or grow their family through adoption. They decided at this point of their lives, adoption was the best way to go.

“I’ve always wanted to be able to help a child out, and know that I was making their lives better than where they came from,” said Jason Noling. “So that is pretty much what solidified our decision.”

The Noling family connected with D.A. Blodgett – St. John’s in 2019 to start this process. One night, Kelly was scrolling through the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) looking at all of the children currently waiting to be adopted in Michigan. This is where she stumbled across 14-year-old Harley’s picture.

“Her hands flew up, and she gasped. When I asked what happened, she said that he was the one,” said Jason. “I went over to the computer and looked at the photo, and said okay, let’s get this started!”

While Jason shared this moment of their story, Harley, now 15, smiled and laughed to himself. When asked how he felt hearing this, he replied, “I’ve heard this story about a hundred times, but I love it.” Continued on next page

Meet Mary, Our President/CEO!

This past December Mary Muliett, LMSW joined DABSJ as President/CEO. She brings with her 23+ years of experience and a true and deep passion for the work.

“What drives me to be in this leadership role is being part of changing the system for kids and families. I want to change the policies and practices that just don’t make sense in our work and create positive change for the kids and families that we support,” said Mary.

Read more inside.
Mary’s skill set will advance the DABSJ mission of helping children and empowering families by providing safety, advocacy and support. She is dedicated to ensuring that DABSJ’s core value of equity, diversity and inclusion are embodied in each of our programs and operations.

“I am humbled and honored to have the opportunity to work alongside an amazing team at DABSJ. Knowing this organization for many years in the sector and knowing its reputation for solid programs that strengthen children and families in west Michigan, I am excited and eager to begin this next chapter with the DABSJ Team,” said Mary.

“I’m looking forward to seeing where we are at as an organization in future years. We have a lot of work to do as an organization and we also have a team with a lot of heart. I wouldn’t want to do this work with any other team and look forward to moving DABSJ forward – together,” she concluded. If you would like to learn more about Mary, visit our blog Work of Heart at dabsj.org.

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The capital campaign has now raised $9.6 million – bringing us to over 96% of our $10 million goal! Thanks to the generosity of over 490 donors, we have the incredible opportunity to better serve more kids and families by centralizing our services to one campus and positioning the agency solidly for the next 25+ years.

We know a lot has changed in our world and at DABSJ since the campaign began, and we are currently working on refining and re-visioning the plans for our new facility to best accommodate the needs of our kids, families and staff. We will finalize building design by May with our architects, Integrated Architecture. The contractor selection process will follow, and we look forward to breaking ground in the fall of this year, moving into the facility in late 2022.

While the timeline to start construction has shifted slightly due to COVID-19, our campaign goals remain the same:

• Integrate our programs and facilities, improving our effectiveness and client outcomes.
• Save approximately $100,000 in annual operating costs.
• Increase our service capacity.
• Being together on one campus for kids and families!

Thank you to our generous donors who invested in the future of DABSJ, ensuring that we empower families by providing safety, advocacy, and support for many years to come.

Please consider supporting the campaign by visiting dabsj.org/together-for-kids. Give $100 or more and receive a commemorative star in the lobby of the future building.

Welcome Regenail Thomas, Vice President of Employee Experience

DABSJ is excited to announce Regenail Thomas has been hired as Vice President of Employee Experience. He began his role on March 8 and brings more than 20 years of experience working in human resources in a wide range of different business environments and leadership roles. Most recently, he worked as Employment/Equity/ADA Manager at the State College of Florida. Prior to that role, Thomas was the Senior Human Resources Manager for Foot Locker/Champs Sports located in Bradenton, Florida.

“We are thrilled to have Regenail join the DABSJ team,” said Mary Muliett, President/CEO of DABSJ. “His lived experiences, expertise and passion for supporting our team members, as well as the children and families in our community, makes him the perfect fit for this role.”

He holds a bachelor’s degree in Management and Human Resources from Park University in Parkville, Missouri, as well as a master’s degree in Adult Education from Elmira College in Elmira, New York.
Many aspects of 2020 made it memorable, but for DABSJ we won’t soon forget the tremendous generosity of our donors. The outpouring of support from our community was a bright light for which we are so grateful. We want to specifically recognize our monthly supporters – who help sustain our ongoing programs and help children and empower families by providing safety, advocacy, and support.

During the past year we saw an increase of 27% to our number of monthly donors! Monthly donors make a lasting impact as they provide crucial and consistent funding to attain a safe, nurturing home for every children and a supportive community for every family.

Did you know that an annual donation of:

- $3.91 a month can provide monthly transportation costs for foster child(ren) to visit with their birth family
- $7.30 a month can provide one therapy session to help children with trauma, anxiety, depression, and/or other mental health issues
- $18.75 a month can provide one week of camp for emotional needs for youth

Champions of Children: Join Today and Make a Lasting Impact

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