



TODD LAW TIMES

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Tragedy Turns To Hope After A Long-Distance Adoption



When families are going through tough legal issues, not being able to find the right help that you desperately need can make a horrible situation seem even more insurmountable.

Kayla and Kyle Nielsen were facing these same feelings of desperation when a drug addiction prevented Kyle's sister from being able to care for her 5- and 7-year-old girls. The girls lived in Georgia and Kayla and Kyle felt helpless from Pennsylvania, not knowing where they were, who they were with, if they were safe, or even if they were fed.

After trying to get help from five different attorneys in Pennsylvania, they were told that since the girls lived in Georgia, they would need a Georgia attorney. They spoke with three attorneys before finally finding the help they needed in Attorney Jillian Todd.

The couple travelled to Georgia in April 2019 for a court hearing where the girls' home situation was determined to be unsafe. They were placed into foster care and while Kayla and Kyle felt relieved that they were moved to a place where they would be safe, they were devastated that they weren't going back to Pennsylvania to be with them. They went home, defeated.

Kayla and Kyle maintained contact with Jillian who maintained contact with the Court. In June 2019, Jillian went on their behalf to the 30-day hearing for the girls' foster care case. Due to the mom's unwillingness to go to a program to help her become clean, the

Judge opened the case and granted custody to the Niensens.

Kayla was shocked upon hearing the news.

"I got a phone call from Ms. Todd around 2pm on June 13, 2019, saying, 'The girls are yours, when can you get here?'" Kayla said. "My jaw dropped; I was so excited that they were ours. We knew we could provide them with what they needed to heal from all that had happened in their lives."

But the long road to having the girls in their arms wasn't quite over yet.

"As excited as I was, I felt immediately overwhelmed," Kayla said. "We had to get these children, 14 hours away, by the very next day, while having a whole household to run and three kids under the age of four already here. I called Kyle, who was away at a work conference, and he just started laughing. He finished his conference and started his two-hour drive home. I called my best friend and neighbor, Molly, and she came right over. I was ranting about what we were going to do and how Kyle had to go alone because we had the kids. Molly said she would stay with them. Our oldest biological child, Korie, has the help of a nurse due to medical complexities and I called her nurse right away - she flexed her hours to help Molly with Korie while we traveled. I began packing and as soon as Kyle got home, we started driving. We drove to Breezewood, Pennsylvania and stayed in a sketchy, cheap motel to get some sleep before driving the rest of the way on Friday."

"When we arrived in Jonesboro at the visitation office to get our girls, they were saying goodbye to their mother," Kayla said. "We didn't know it at the time, but that was the last time they saw her. It's bittersweet. They love her but she just isn't safe for them. It's heartbreaking to know how far into her addiction she is that she allowed what she allowed to happen. When we got home on Saturday and got our other babies back, they were excited to have new playmates. Since we've been foster parents in the past, they were used

to kids coming and going and we were very open with them by explaining that the girls are their sisters now and they would be with us for a while. As time progressed, we told them it would be forever, but being a foster parent in the past I knew how quickly things can change. But Ms. Todd gave us such peace of mind and we are so thankful for her. The adoption is final, we are so excited to be their forever parents, and are so grateful they are safe."





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Out & About in Clayton County

“Community” is a word you hear a lot around Jonesboro and throughout Clayton County. New construction projects are popping up everywhere designed to give residents more places to learn, congregate, and help one another. There are always new events aimed at highlighting all the cutting-edge things Jonesboro has going on and the city does a great job of getting everyone involved in their community, as a community. What’s your favorite community event or effort in Jonesboro? Email us at anneke@josephmtodd.com or post the answer to our Facebook page and you could win a \$25 gift card to the local business of your choice!



RECIPES OF THE MONTH



Photo credit: foodiecrush.com

Goat Cheese and Spinach Stuffed Chicken Thighs

Light but extremely flavorful, this dish is perfect paired with roasted butternut squash or brown rice.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ pounds bone-in skin-on, chicken thighs (about 4 pieces)
- ¼ cup goat cheese, softened
- ¼ cup cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup wilted spinach chopped and squeezed of extra moisture
- ¼ cup drained artichoke hearts, chopped
- ¼ cup sun-drained tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2-3 tablespoons olive or canola oil
- ½ cup chicken broth

DIRECTIONS

1. Let the chicken sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes before cooking so it takes the chicken comes to even internal temperature for even cooking.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
3. In a medium size bowl, mix the goat cheese and

the cream cheese together until smooth. Stir the spinach, artichoke hearts, sun-dried tomatoes, basil, kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper into the cheese mixture until combined.

4. Pat the chicken dry with a paper towel. Carefully loosen the skin from the thigh meat with your fingers, gingerly making a pocket so the skin is still connected at the edges to the meat. Gently place a spoonful of the goat cheese mixture in the pocket between the skin and the chicken, keeping it in a small mound of cheese. Pull the skin so it covers the chicken and season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

5. In a large cast iron skillet, add the olive oil over medium high heat. Place the chicken skin-side down in the skillet. Cook for about 4-5 minutes or until the chicken skin is golden and crispy. Carefully turn the chicken over and cook for another 4-5 minutes or until it's golden brown. If the chicken sticks to the pan, it isn't ready to turn.

6. Add the chicken broth to the bottom of the pan and carefully cover with aluminum foil. Put in the oven for 12 -15 minutes, or until this internal temperature of the chicken reaches 160°F. Remove from the oven and let the chicken rest for 5 minutes. The chicken will continue to cook as it sits. Garnish with more basil and serve.



Safe Place Locations Around Jonesboro, Nationwide Provide Havens For Struggling Teens

When teens find themselves in crisis or need a place to stay, they should know how and where to get help. Regardless of what is going on their lives, teens should never feel like they have no where to turn for safety and shelter.

The Jonesboro Branch Library is one of 12 locations in our city alone that is deemed a Safe Place for teens, providing access to immediate help and supportive resources for youth in need. As a community initiative, the program designates schools, fire stations, libraries, and other youth-friendly organizations as Safe Place locations, which display the yellow and black sign.

Safe Place locations extend the doors of the local youth service agency or shelter to support teens in crisis situations, creating a safety net for youth.

Clayton County Safe Places are also located in Riverdale, Morrow, and Forest Park; to locate a Safe Place closest to you, visit nationalsafeplace.org and click on "Find a Safe Place".



TXT 4 HELP

TXT 4 HELP is a nationwide, 24-hour text-for-support service for youth in crisis.

How it works:

Text the word "safe" and your current location (city/state/zip) to 4HELP (44357).

Within seconds, you will receive a message with the closest Safe Place location. Reply with "2Chat" to text one-on-one with a professional. It's quick, easy, safe, and confidential.

For a teen that needs immediate help, Safe Place also created their TXT 4 HELP program which is a nationwide, 24-hour text-for-support service for teens in crisis.

All teens must do is text the word "safe" and your current location (address, city, state) to 4HELP (44357) and within seconds they'll receive a message with the closest Safe Place site and phone number for the local youth agency.

From there they can reply with "2chat" to text interactively with a trained counselor who can provide guidance and assistance for all types of issues including abuse, bullying, family problems, depression, suicidal thoughts, and others.

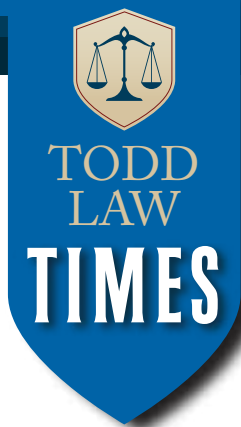


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*Joe and
Jillian*

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Jonesboro Pays Tribute To Fallen Veterans In Beautiful Way

Thank you to all of those who made possible this moving flag display to honor Memorial Day and pay tribute to those who lost their lives protecting our freedom. The flags waved over crosses bearing the names of fallen veterans and the wars in which they served. The display was a humble reminder of the reason we get to enjoy the freedoms we do and it was greatly appreciated by our office.



Raving Fan of the Month

“It was surprising that so few attorneys have experienced what we were going through. I enjoyed Jillian very much - she was always amazing.”

– *Kayla Nielsen*