

GOOD NEWS WITH BRAD SCHMITT

INSPIRATION

ON
THE
RIGHT
PATH

Taylor Hart DuRard, center, with
his parents, Carrie and Jase
DuRard. BRAD SCHMITT/THE TENNESSEAN



Extraordinary TN family gets national spotlight

As a boy, Taylor Hart DuRard lived through hell, surviving beatings, food deprivation and other forms of abuse and neglect at the hands of his biological father and stepmother, according to Taylor, police officers in Murfreesboro and state authorities.

His older brother, John, didn't make it. He died on May 26, 2016 – at 13 years old.

Through the grace of God and state authorities, Taylor ended up with a loving couple, Carrie and Jase DuRard, who eventually adopted Taylor. Now, the three of them work hard to advocate for foster kids, and they even started their own nonprofit, Jonathan's Path, to support those kids.

Late last year, the federal government took notice. The Department of Health and Human Services gave the DuRards the 2024 Adoption Excellence Award.

"Every child deserves a stable and loving home, and today's awardees have worked tirelessly to make that happen," then DHHS exec Meg Sullivan said at a ceremony with the Administration for Children and Families in Washington, D.C.

But that's not all. The agency decided to include the DuRards in a national campaign aimed at inspiring others to adopt teens from foster care.

The campaign is called The Rewards, and one spot will make you cry. In it, Carrie and Jase tear up as they watch video of their adopted son, Taylor, praising them.

"I've had three other mother figures in my life," Taylor says. "But only one of them has taught me how a mother loves."

In another, Taylor says, "I've had many male figures in my life, but there's only been one that has taught me that it's OK to be silly, it's OK to feel small, it's OK to admit you need help. And with anything, I can always go to my dad."

Taylor, now a 20-year-old college student, said "being part of this campaign is an incredible honor. It allows us to share the beauty of adoption and encourage others to open their hearts and homes to teens in foster care. Adoption changes lives, not just for the youth, but for families as a whole."

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