

WISH BOOK: Grandmother looks to give grandsons a special Christmas

Single grandma looks for help after moving family to Jeffersonville



Liam Auld, 3, and his brother Kai Auld, 2, clown around with their grandmother, Leanne McNamee in their apartment in Jeffersonville.

JEFFERSONVILLE — **Leanne McNamee** and her two grandsons, **Liam** and **Kai Auld**, are 600 miles away from everything they know. McNamee, 49, moved to Jeffersonville with Liam, 3, and Kai, 2, in September – leaving friendships, familiarity and a support system in another state.

But McNamee needed to keep her family safe. She has full custody of her grandsons, and she feared retaliation from their father.

“The boys are her No. 1 priority,” said **Chelsea Parman**, the family’s New Hope Services caseworker. “That’s clear in everything she does.”

McNamee agreed. “It’s always been about the babies from the very beginning,” she said. The first time McNamee applied for emergency custody of Liam from his father and mother, who is McNamee’s daughter, she thought it would be temporary.

“...Mom and dad would get it together, and I would just be there to take care of [Liam], make sure he was safe and then provide an environment for them to come visit,” she said. But Liam and Kai’s parents struggle with addiction and mental health issues.

“...These drugs and alcohol cause families to rip apart,” McNamee said. “You have a mom in one state, a dad in another state. The kids are in a third state with their grandma. There are safety issues. There’s manipulation — all kinds of crazy stuff that goes on.”

Liam’s parents returned to his life briefly, but eventually let their visitation rights fall by the wayside, allowing McNamee to obtain full custody of him in May 2014. In the meantime, [they] had Kai.

McNamee received Kai only after he had to be rescued from his parents' car in the middle of winter — an infection under his neck from being unwashed. He was in the 30th percentile for his weight, too, McNamee said. "But now he's 99th percentile," she said, looking down at him. "You're a chunk because of grandma loving."

Liam didn't speak for a while because of his family situation, but now McNamee describes him as articulate. "I got to work in my room for second," he announced after a few minutes in the living room with McNamee, Kai and Parman.

McNamee and her grandsons lived with her brother when they first arrived in Jeffersonville, but he wasn't used to living with two boys who like to wrestle. McNamee had to move out, but she also needed a place to go. She received some help on a trip to Sam's Club.

"The ladies behind the counter must have known that I was in dire straits," she said. They told her about her current apartment complex, which offers income-based rent rates, and introduced her to New Hope Services.

New Hope helped McNamee secure beds for her grandsons, and it gives her a place where she can talk with other adults. Now, she and her grandsons are getting by, but they still need help.

McNamee works from home for a transportation company, but she wants a job that makes more money to better care for Liam and Kai.

She has furniture and other possessions, but she still sleeps on a pile of towels and blankets. Still, McNamee has just one wish for Liam and Kai after a year of tough changes. "I just want this to be a Christmas for them to remember," she said.

HOW TO HELP

The best way to assist families is with a financial donation with which items will be purchased. With each of the profiles of five families being featured Nov. 28 – Dec. 2 in the News and Tribune and at www.newsandtribune.com will be a list of items needed.

Donations can be dropped off at **New Hope, 1302 Wall St., Jeffersonville.**

Checks can be mailed to New Hope to that address.

Call 812-288-4304 or email patricia_kitehannon@newhopeservices.org with questions.

To donate with a **credit card**, please go to www.newhopeservices.org/donate.html and designate it as a **Wish Book** donation. The deadline to donate is Dec. 15.

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR FAMILY NEEDS

FAMILY WISH LIST

LEANNE

Pants - size 14
Shirts - XL
Shoes - 8-8.5
Socks
Underwear
Coat
Hat/scarf/gloves
Slippers
Bath & Body Works candles
Sweats - XL
Bed

LIAM

Pants - 5T
Shirts - 5T
Shoes – 12
Socks
Underwear
Coat
Hat/scarf/gloves
Slippers
Bike with training wheels
Bike helmet
Football helmet
Captain America shield
“Avengers” DVD
“Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” DVD
“Avengers” wall decals

KAI

Pants - 4T
Shirts - 4T
Shoes – 10
Socks
Underwear
Coat
Hat/scarf/gloves
Slippers
Books
Football helmet
Little People
“Avengers” toys
Captain America shield
Crayons
Coloring books
Puzzles

FAMILY NEEDS

Microwave
Bath towels
Wash cloths
Silverware
Silverware caddy
Non-stick fry pan
Toaster oven
Shower curtain
Hooks
Shower caddy
Lamps
Christmas tree
DVD player
Wooden rolling pin
Utensil holder

By Danielle Grady

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