



Transplant Dad Denzel Tells Their Story

We are the Washingtons. Dad is Denzel, mom is Sarah, daughter Alina who is 5, and son Adonis who is 2 years old. We are a full family of 4 expecting a plus 1 in October 2024.

Life is such a meaningful word these days after such a turmoil of experiences through the last year. On April 4, 2024, our life changed forever. Hit with unexpected news about our wonderful and spontaneous daughter Alina. We had noticed she was not herself as of late. Sadly, news came about that our sweet girl had been diagnosed with a heart disease called Restrictive Cardiomyopathy and she would have to have a heart transplant. To add on she would not be able to go home because she would need to be monitored close at the hospital and have to be put on Ventricular Assist Devices (BIVAD).

We had no knowledge of the actions that were going to take place. Presenting us with options that sounded like a foreign language. Hearing this news and never having to deal with this kind of stuff through our family was really a wakeup call seeing how as we were not prepared for this at all. Not only mentally but realizing how much a toll financially this takes on a family that has nothing to reach or grab on for this kind of support. We understand people have their own lives as well and even though some people want to give the world to help you, they just aren't able and it's nothing that should ever make anyone feel they do not care about your situation just because they can't help financially. We turned to God and just prayed He will lift this burden from us while our daughter was going through this tragedy that we had no understanding of.

In this city Palo Alto, we were sent to Stanford a great hospital and couldn't have asked to be at a better place. With that being said, it is truly so expensive to stay and even eat in this town. I cannot stress enough how expensive it is for people who travel so far to come get help trying to save their own or their loved one's life, then to not really be able to eat or even house yourself close to the hospital is an addition to the stress and worry you have just being at a hospital. They offer a housing near no charge which is called the Ronald McDonald but sometimes there is not availability for some people who really need it. If you can't get in there then you're stuck paying \$150-\$300 a night a hotel or even more for an Airbnb and not to mention the medical cost after your visit that will stick with you. It's just a stressful thing to constantly think about.

As a father trying my best from going to laughing and seeing the world in a simple way to life turned into not being able to afford to care for my family or even house them is a degrading feeling I can only imagine single parents. With my fiancé being pregnant at the moment it was not ideal. Any parent can imagine the place our minds were at. Over the course of the months Stanford offered us just 1 month of rental assistance and \$50 a week to spend at their own cafe which was also expensive, and we could not save the \$50 it was given into



vouchers. Was definitely a helpful gesture from them to offer us none the less, we have to use gas to go back and forth almost 2 and a half hours away to see our son, tried to tend to our jobs which was of equal distance.

Everything was hitting fast, and bills were backing up. Rent, car payment, cell phone, credit cards, diapers and groceries, just the everyday life essentials. Nothing ever seemed enough. Seemed like everyday it would just pile and pile. Eventually we had to decide to let our apartment go which we couldn't afford anymore and led us to be now homeless looking for a home as of now. With our faith in the Lord nothing was ever too much for us to keep a smile on our face in front of our daughter. As a family and team we made sure she was always in the best mood even though with her situation it could be hard to do so.

Little did we know there are foundations and people who band together to help people get through these times that have the same background as we do. After living in the hospital almost 7 months we were pointed in a direction of a foundation called Heartfelt Help Foundation. We knew there were other foundations that help and we tried to reach out but it would always take weeks and months to hear back. After one phone call and an online application it seemed our now dear friend Denise had already constructed our stay at a hotel where we would be able to call a part time home for the mean time. The amount of weight lifted off our shoulders even for a small period of time was a phenomenal feeling that we will forever be grateful for. We cannot thank the foundation enough.

We hope to help people who go through these times that have no financial support for housing near Stanford. Knowing how hard it is from a personal experience. They are a great foundation and not only us as parents but our children are thankful. We haven't really stayed at hotels with them so it's like a vacation for them. We would like to personally thank Denise for her help and always being available to assist us when needed. Thank you to the foundation as a whole. From the Washington family, we are forever thankful and you guys made us feel like you are truly and extension of family.

Thank you.