

For as long as Amanda could remember, Texas was home. She spent most of her life in and around Houston — among oil derricks and 10-gallon cowboy hats, eventually moving to Longview in her mid-20s.

Texas was where she grew up, went to school and met her fiancé. It's also where her life turned upside down. Pregnant at age 25 and equally excited and terrified, she wondered how she would support a child.

“Even though Houston had been home for so long, my fiancé and I were largely on our own,” Amanda explains. “We both knew help would be appreciated and needed.”

To provide a good life for their daughter Saylor, Amanda and her fiancé, Aaron, decided they couldn't stay in Texas. Their support system was elsewhere.

Iowa beckoned.



Amanda (right) and fiancé, Aaron (left), welcoming their baby, Saylor, into the world.

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Moving During a Pandemic

The family of three decided to relocate to Des Moines — a place with opportunity aplenty. While far from Texas, Iowa had family who could offer support. They planned to move in April 2020, but Texas had one last surprise for them.

“We learned the Texas borders might close due to the pandemic,” Amanda says. “So, we left a month earlier than we planned with a nine-month-old baby in tow.” Punctuated by frequent stops for a teething baby, they made the 722-mile journey over two days.

As they settled into their new life, Amanda reconnected with a program she initially joined in Houston, Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) at EveryStep, her “lifeline” as a new mother.

The pandemic's deadly grip grew as they tried to get their bearings in Des Moines, which meant in-home NFP visits transitioned to virtual video calls, known as telehealth. It was at that most surreal of times that Amanda met her new NFP nurse, Becky.

“Amanda was the first client I worked with exclusively virtually,” says Becky. “I was struck by the unique challenges she faced moving to a new city during a pandemic, and I wanted to support her.”

It wasn't easy for Amanda, far away from the Texas sky she loved so much. The presence of her dad nearby softened the transition, but the stress of not being able to find a job, safely explore her new city, or meet new friends weighed heavily on her. Becky became their rock as Amanda and her fiancé got on their feet.

"Just being able to text Becky and call her when I didn't know anyone here was a big help," says Amanda. "She connected me with a Facebook group for new moms, which provided emotional support and much-needed friendship."

Despite their challenges, Amanda and Aaron found full-time jobs and arranged their schedules so someone was always home to take care of Saylor, who adjusted to the move well.

"It was hard in the beginning, but Amanda is so strong. She advocated for herself and overcame her worries and anxieties," says Becky. "It was amazing to see."

COVID-19

In late 2020, Aaron tested positive for COVID-19 after being exposed at work. A few days later, Amanda and baby Saylor became sick.

Becky rushed to their aid, teaching Amanda what to look for and how to track her daughter's symptoms, ultimately keeping the little girl out of the emergency department. During it all, Amanda's family provided additional support through food and supply deliveries.

"Amanda and her fiancé were nervous," says Becky. "They weren't sure if they would be able to work, they didn't know what to expect or what to do or how the baby would react to the infection." On top of everything else, Amanda had missed the deadline to get health insurance through her company, so she was now uninsured.

"Becky was so supportive during it all," says Amanda. "We were stuck at home for almost six weeks, and she was there every step of the way."



Aaron (left), Amanda (center) and Saylor (right) are enjoying their new hometown of Des Moines, IA.

Knowing care was critical for the young family, Becky connected Amanda with a primary care physician, and thankfully, everyone recovered.

Onwards and Upwards

NFP was a critical support system for Amanda during a time that would've been difficult under the best of circumstances but was made more complicated by the pandemic.

Today, Amanda is a soon-to-be graduate of NFP and is thriving in Des Moines.

"I went from not knowing how to do 50 things to knowing how to do 100 things, and I have Nurse-Family Partnership and nurse Becky to thank for that," Amanda says. She credits her nurse for not only teaching her how to best care for Saylor, but also how to get on her feet.

"It's my passion to help people," says Becky. "Amanda really wants to succeed, and I'm happy to help her. It feels like I've known her for a lifetime."