

December 18, 2022

Dear Au Pair in America,

I am forever grateful to our wonderful au pair, Tawyny Vitoria Da Silva Santos. I had no idea how much help my family and I would need over the last year, but God knew. And He sent just the right person to help our family. It is my pleasure to nominate Tawyny for the Au Pair of the Year award based upon her positive impact on our family, her amazing community involvement, and her genuine commitment to cultural exchange.

Tawyny's positive impact on our family was immediate. Within two weeks of Tawyny's arrival, we experienced a death in Tawyny's family, a death in our family, and my oldest son ended up in the hospital with a scary asthma attack. Just two days after my son's trip to the hospital, I went in for a planned surgery. The recovery was supposed to be 6 weeks, but it ended up being closer to 6 months. It was an intense time. Through it all, though, Tawyny was right here with us. She helped care for our kids when I couldn't. She even helped care for ME (and she really didn't have to!) - getting me to and from physical therapy some days, encouraging me and praying for me all along the way.

When Tawyny first arrived, she told us everyone loves her. It seemed like such an odd comment, and we all had a good laugh about it. In time, though, we learned it is, indeed, true. In Tawyny, my three sons have a swimming coach, soccer competitor, friend with whom to play endless rounds of board games, and so much more. As you can imagine, they adore her. Tawyny is also awesome with our extended family. During my 75-year-old parents' visit, Tawyny somehow convinced them to join her for a 3-mile walk around our neighborhood, during which she taught them Portuguese and talked about life. Amazingly, everyone who visits us leaves with a similarly charming story about Tawyny. Everyone DOES love Tawyny!

Tawyny has been a great addition to our family, but she is also a much beloved member of our community. She volunteered to teach Portuguese and Brazilian culture at my kids' elementary school, and she took homemade Brazilian treats to their Thanksgiving party. YUM! She was also the volunteer photographer at our school's Mother's Day event, ensuring all moms were free to enjoy the event with their children. When our friends welcomed their own au pair a few months ago, they called Tawyny to help him settle in. That's how fond our friends have grown of her. Finally, Tawyny is an active member of her church, where she sings on the worship team. I can honestly say Tawyny has helped make our little part of the world a bit brighter, a bit better.

Tawyny has impacted our family and community, and she's eager to soak up American culture. She is determined to speak English fluently, and she often studies English in her

free time. Her self-discipline and determination are truly admirable. Tawyny also asks detailed questions about each holiday, then adds her own Brazilian flair to our American traditions. For instance, Tawyny and her friends joined our 4th of July cookout, which quickly turned into a cornhole tournament and backyard dance party with Brazilian and American line dances. It was so much fun! Tawyny has shown great interest in our culture, and she makes sure we learn her culture, too. Her Brazilian beans and rice with a fried egg are now staples in our home. And we all learned the birthday song in Portuguese so we could sing along with her family (via WhatsApp) on Tawyny's big day. I can't imagine anyone committing more fully to the cultural exchange aspect of the au pair program.

Tawyny is the real deal. She has impressed us all by positively impacting our family, serving our community, and engaging in cultural exchange. She is also just a really great young woman. She is smart, kind, patient, funny, wise, and loving. Her smile is contagious. Her laugh is like music, and her actual music (she sings and plays the piano when she thinks no one can hear) brings joy to our home.

Tawyny is amazing, and if she isn't the au pair of the year, I really don't know who is.

Sincerely,

*Cecelia H. Curtis*

Cecelia H. Curtis & The Curtis Family