

STORY 2: ABBY - Caucasian, Age 40

Lesbian couple and kids found a welcoming place at their Y in the Deep South

ABBY:

We were looking for a gym... a pool... workout classes. Most importantly... childcare. We have three kids... two little boys and a brand-new baby girl. So lucky for us, our local Y has all of that. Best of all, we are made to feel welcome. Now, that's probably not a surprise to y'all. But when you're a gay couple with three kids, living in the South... feeling "welcome" is not always a sure thing.

My wife Stacey and I have experienced discrimination many times in many different places. So when we go somewhere new, we have the worry... "Will our family be welcome here?"

When we first got to the Y, we wondered if there would be questions... or if there would be some kind of restrictions. But there was none of that. We wondered if we would qualify for family membership. The answer was "yes, of course." Once, I asked a senior person at the Y if they had a policy about how families are defined. Her answer was... the Y doesn't define your family, YOU do.

And so when we go to the Y, we feel safe. We get to be ourselves. We are out and open. When we walk through that door two or three times a week, people know our names... know our routine... hug our kids.

I remember early on they asked the boys what they call their two moms... so the staff could refer to us the same way. Again, that may seem like no big deal to you, but it means the world to us. The people at our Y are more than just "inclusive." There's something there I don't think you can teach. It's compassion. And I know our kids can feel it.

So, yeah, the childcare is great. I'm happy to work out and shoot hoops. Stacey is happy that she can swim and go to spin class. All of those things matter, but it's the sense of community that matters the most. Stacey says she feels loved at the Y. I say y'all are like family. And we both agree... the Y feels like home.