

## Meet Cody & Aiko



### Steppingstone

Aiko was born in Carthage, Tennessee and spent her earliest years living in Sevierville. Her mom went to school, and both of her parents worked a lot, so her grandmothers played a significant role in raising her. At a very young age Aiko developed a love for the arts. She enjoyed painting, dressing up in costumes, acting, and performing. She has lived in three different states over the course of seven years, before landing back in Tennessee in 2010.

Aiko knew she wanted to go to college and pursue her love for the arts. She tried starting a couple of times, but it just wasn't her season. A couple of years ago, Aiko decided to go back to try again. She is majoring in English, minoring in Theatre, and will earn a teaching license. This fall, Aiko will become both a college graduate and a homeowner.

Cody was born in Nashville, Tennessee and spent his earliest years living in Smyrna with his mom and brother. When he was in seventh grade, his family moved to Murfreesboro. As a child, Cody loved being outside and tinkering with electronics. He got his first job at Corky's and fell in love with food and serving others.

Cody and Aiko met in 2015 through a mutual friend. They began dating almost a year after their first meeting and have been together ever since. In November of 2019, the couple moved into an older duplex and in January of 2020, welcomed their first child. Currently both Cody and Aiko work for Tru by Hilton. Homeownership is something that they both wanted, but honestly seemed like something they would not be able to achieve. When a family member mentioned the Rutherford County Area Habitat for Humanity Homeownership program, they began to hope.

The couple took a leap of faith and applied for the program. They almost missed the deadline, but everything came together at the last minute. Cody admits that he was nervous and excited when they turned in their application, but Aiko was cautiously optimistic. When they received the call that they had been accepted into the program, Aiko began to cry tears of joy. She knew that being a part of the RCHFH program was an amazing blessing and an important steppingstone to building their life together.

Since being in the program, Cody and Aiko have thoroughly enjoyed the financial literacy and homeowner education classes. "I am thankful that we are learning about budgeting and what is to come," Cody admitted. "I loved meeting the other homeowners," Aiko said with a smile. The couple is excited to roll up their sleeves and get their "hands dirty" as they take part in the building process.

This home will be an important foundation to building a stable life for their family. Aiko hopes to have a beautiful garden like both her grandmothers, Cody plans to continue fostering his love for cooking, and their son is looking forward to putting a playset in the backyard.

The family would like to thank the sponsors and volunteers that helped make the building of their home possible, as well as the RCHFH staff and Board of Directors that make homeownership achievable for others.