

Sarah's so smitten with her pet pig Petunia – the awesome oinker even sleeps between her and her hubby!

PIGGY in the MIDDLE



Me and Petunia



She loves her rollers



Elijah with Petunia



Peaches loves dressing up too

David was busy working nights as a doctor. I told my pals that sleeping next to a pig was no different to sleeping with a cat or dog – and she probably snored less than their husbands! Other nights Petunia slept in her crate, or in her very own bedroom. We just wanted her to be happy, so she chose to do what she wanted, when she wanted to! Her boudoir contained her own little pink bed, and a wardrobe full of bespoke outfits. It had been my idea to try dressing her up, and when we'd given it a go, Petunia had adored it. I would never have put her in clothes if she wasn't a happy hog, but Petunia was

in her element. Plus, she's looked hot to trot! Now I've spent nearly £200 on her custom-made outfits, but she's worth every penny. Petunia is so glam that we even pop rollers into her bristle! Having three pigs who mainly live in the house might seem strange to some, but we wouldn't have it any other way. Getting that terrific trio was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

'Let's try to teach her some tricks'

One day I hope to get Petunia certified as a therapy animal, so that I can take her into schools and old people's homes. She brings so much joy to our lives that I want to share that with other people. Looking after pet pigs can be a lot of work, and they aren't cheap, but our family haven't looked back. Our super swines are just sensational!

Sarah Minix, 39

very much!' Smiling, I dozed back off, with Petunia tucked in between me and my husband, David.

Talk about piggy in the middle! I thought when I woke.

Eight months earlier, my two youngest, Elijah and Mikayla, three, had come to me with a burning question. 'Mum, can we get a pet pig?' Elijah asked. 'Why do you want one of those?' I asked. 'Because they're so cute!' Mikayla chipped in. 'Me and your dad will think about it,' I said. I had to admit, I liked the idea of having a piggy pal around the place too. They were terribly sweet creatures. But with five kids, three cats and two dogs, I wondered if we had time to dedicate to a trotter

housemate. Still, I could help researching how to care for pigs, and what they needed to thrive. Next, I began looking for local pig breeders. Soon, David and I were on our way to a farm. Meeting us out front, the farmer took us to the pen, where his piggies were running around oinking. Two of the terrific trotters caught our eye, and we ended up taking them! They were American mini pigs, and would grow up to one metre and weigh up to 200lb. It was hard to believe, because they were currently half that size. Back home, we called the kids downstairs. 'We have a surprise for you,' I said, as they came running down. When they spotted the pigs in the living room, their eyes lit up. 'Piggies!' Mikayla cooed. 'What do you want to name

them?' I asked. 'This one can be Peaches, and this one can be Mr Pickles,' Elijah grinned. The kids absolutely adored their new pets. We crate-trained them and they slept in their crates at night. They could go to the toilet either outside or use puppy pads indoors, like a dog would. And whenever we had to leave home for a couple of days or more, they'd board with other piggies. Peaches and Mr Pickles settled in so well, and it was a joy watching the kids bond with their pig pals. They were so gentle, making sure the super swines had everything they could possibly need. Caring for the piggy pair brought out their compassionate side too. We doted on the oinkers so much, I couldn't help longing for a third. And one day, I found the

'Why do you want one of those?'

perfect piggy online! 'She's The One!' David grinned, taking in her gorgeous teeny features. I contacted the breeder, and five days later, we drove to see her for the first time. She had the sweetest face, and beautiful black and white markings. I kneeled down next to her, and she sniffed my hands inquisitively. 'Hello there!' I said, as I stroked her bristly hair. She squealed and rubbed up against me, and I knew that she was going to be part of our family. It was her way of saying, 'Take me home please, you're my mummy now!' There's no arguing with that, I thought. 'We'll take her!' I said, handing over £275. We decided to call her Petunia – as it also started with P – and her grandmother was called Petunia. Before we knew it, Petunia

was ruling the roost and hogging the limelight! She adored Peaches, Mr Pickles, the cats and dogs, and the kids were simply smitten with her. Elijah, who was autistic and suffered with sensory needs, particularly took a shine to her. He sometimes got overstimulated, but Petunia acted as his therapy pig, helping to calm and comfort him during his difficult episodes. If ever he was on the verge of a tantrum, I'd say, 'Where's Petunia?' Then he'd seek her out and give her a cuddle, instantly easing the tension. I often found them snuggled up together, which was remarkable as Elijah usually struggled to relax or sit still. She was so gentle and patient with him, and they had such a



Mr Pickles

As told to Ellie Favre and Danielle Lett