

## From One Million Questions to a Loving Family of Five

By Kelly Erickson, LSS Therapeutic Foster Care parent



My husband and I always knew we wanted to be involved with foster care and adoption. What we did not realize was how soon, and how quickly, our family would grow!

We started our foster care journey in April 2016 with Lutheran Social Service Therapeutic Foster Care. I still remember going to our introduction meeting with a million questions – all of which our TFC Coordinator handled with ease. It took a few months to get through the licensing process. In December 2016 we welcomed our first two kiddos, Ashley and Alfonso.

Going from a young couple to a family with two school aged kids was quite the shock. Suddenly our schedules revolved around therapy appointments, tutoring sessions, school meetings and extracurricular activities. It was such a joy to see them get settled, find their confidence and explore their passions.

### Becoming adoptive parents, again

In May 2017 we were asked if we would consider adopting Ashley and Alfonso – and of course the

answer was a resounding yes. It took months to finalize their adoption, but on August 30, 2018 our friends and family filled the court room and we celebrated like crazy.

One evening in October 2018, I received a phone call from Ashley and Alfonso's social worker. We were shocked to learn that Ashley and Alfonso had a new biological baby brother – and surprised when we were asked to welcome him into our family.

There were a million reasons why we should have said no – our house is too small; we had just finalized the adoption of Ashley and Alfonso; they were thriving with our routine; and, we were thrilled to be done with the foster/adoption process and all of the visits. We adopted older kids for a reason – and most importantly, we had zero idea how to take care of a baby, especially one that would have an extensive NICU stay. But yet, we still said absolutely yes. A few days passed as we fretted about a baby we did not even know – but for whatever reason, it was just not meant to be. At that point, the judge decided to let the biological family parent.

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Fast forward a few weeks: we had just moved to a new home over Christmas and the kids were getting ready to start their new school. The phone rings and it is the social worker – baby's biological family wants to terminate parental rights and have your family adopt him. Will you?

### PREPARING FOR A BABY

While most parents have months to prepare for an infant, we had two days! With hesitation, we bought out the baby section at Target while hoping this time it would work out and the baby would come home to us. You learn quickly in foster care that nothing is official until a judge signs off on it. A few days later, we welcomed our little guy home.

So, there we were – 27-year-old parents with a 10-year-old, an 8-year-old and a 10-week-old. We went back to the life of monthly visits, appointments and reports. We started the adoption process all over again. We learned how to become a family of five, figured out all things baby and had an absolute blast watching our baby boy grow. On October 3, 2019 our friends and family filled the courtroom again and we celebrated Noah's adoption like crazy.

### OUR BEAUTIFUL, CRAZY LIFE WITH THREE KIDS

Our kids are now 12, 10 and 1. Therapies, tutoring and extracurriculars are still part of our everyday life. Ashley and Alfonso have grown and excelled so much in the three amazing years they have been with us. Noah brings us so much joy with his ever-present smile and constant giggles. We are unbelievably proud of our kids and all they have achieved.

Do we have our struggles? Yes. Do we sometimes have no idea what we are doing? More often than not! Would we change a thing? Absolutely not.

You never know where your life will lead you and who knows what will happen with our family next. But for right now, we are settled into our life of chaos with three kids, two dogs, two cats and even a guinea pig!

We will forever be grateful for the support and encouragement our amazing team with Lutheran Social Service Therapeutic Foster Care has given us throughout our entire journey. We are so blessed to be touched by foster care and adoption – and to think our family started with one introductory meeting and one TFC Coordinator who answered my one million questions.



Learn from our story – if you have any interest in foster care or adoption, take a leap and get more information. You never know what it might bring!



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