

## Care To Share Your Story?

### My Story Becomes Our Story

By Kathy Evans

As a young child I often felt that I wanted to be adopted. I sought to be with a family that would love me and take care of me. As I grew older I realized that one day I wanted to adopt children to save them from a life like the one I lived.

My husband and I married in 1989; we began having our own family. We hadn't really talked much about adoption. We had talked about how many children we wanted. I, of course, wanted more than my husband; I wanted six and he wanted three. My husband and I agreed that we would compromise and have four, which is what we did. However, when our fourth child, Sean, died, we were left with a huge hole in our hearts. Grief stricken and unable to conceive again, with miscarriage after miscarriage, we just stopped trying.

Three years after our son died I realized that my heart had much more love to give and I needed to have more children in our home. My husband didn't quite agree at first. We were getting older and so were our children, it would be like starting all over again.

We agreed to go through an adoption class. After the class finished we weren't getting calls for children. One day a call came about a young boy who had Down's syndrome. I was scared immediately, since I had worked with Down's children for years I asked several questions. Although I knew in my heart how loving Down's children were, I also knew that there were potential health-risk issues with their hearts. After getting the answers to my questions, I realized that this boy did in fact have a heart condition and his life span wasn't a positive thing. I could not do that to my other children. I couldn't have a child that I knew wasn't going to live long. I couldn't bury another child. I think that is why bereaved parents tend to shy away from fostering or adopting. I wish more bereaved parents would consider fostering/adopting. Even though I know that no one can ever replace your child that has died, these children can certainly help fill that huge hole.

My husband and I finally agreed to foster. Maybe we could have some children that we could love for a while and give them what they needed. By the time we decided to just foster, the system had changed some, now we could be foster/adoptive parents. We knew that was the answer for us. We decided that we could be okay with returning a child to their biological parents, if that was what the State suggested. We also knew we would be willing to adopt a child if that is the way it worked out.

On March 31, 2004, at 4:30 p.m. we received our foster/adoptive license. On March 31, 2004, at 4:40 p.m. (yes, 10 minutes later) we received a call for a sibling pair, two boys, one being 9 months old and one almost 8 years old. When we talked about it, there was no way we could take both. Although it had been seven years since our son had died, we weren't ready to deal with two more children. We agreed to take the 9-month-old with the stipulation that we could have him visit his brother and, if anything happened at his brother's placement, we would in fact take his brother.

That evening at 10, our caseworker showed up with the baby. When she walked in the door with him, he immediately stopped crying and put his arms out to me. The caseworker said he had been crying since she had picked him up. The strangest thing was he looked just like our son who had died seven years earlier. The baby was in awful condition, a diaper rash with a yeast infection and blisters all the way up to his waist. He also had a double ear infection. Even though the case worker had taken him to the ER before she brought him to us, I decided to take him to a pediatrician the next day.

I had scheduled an appointment to see his brother about two weeks after our placement; it was the week after Easter. His brother was apparently someone that the other foster family could not handle. The day after Easter we received a call about his brother. My caseworker informed me that the problems his older brother had were that he was a bed wetter and had temper tantrums. So I said: "And so what is the problem?" This boy was taken from his mother, his father died when he was 5 and he was separated from his sibling. I asked the caseworker to bring him to me; I felt I had time enough to begin my bonding with the 9-month-old and now the older boy needed me, too.

When James (the older brother) came into the house, the first thing he wanted to do was see his brother's diaper rash. I showed him that it was gone, he wondered how and I explained to him that we had gotten him the medicine that he needed. Then James wanted to feed his brother. It made me realize that James had been the parent to this baby, taking care of him the best he could. I explained to James that taking care of the baby was my job. I was supposed to be the parent he just needed to be a kid.

As I am sure you can imagine, within a few months we were totally in love with these boys. We committed ourselves and our family to adopt the boys. We had other foster children, ones that were either returned to their biological parents or were placed in another foster/adoptive home. These two were staying as far as we were concerned. Luckily, the State agreed, we were getting the boys.

It took what seemed like decades to make these children our own, but September 1, 2006, we adopted our boys. They have blessed our lives, and, yes, we basically have started all over again.

Our children are now 20, 18, and 15; James is now almost 13 and Ian (the baby) is almost 6. Our lives have been forever changed, our hearts are full, always missing our son that isn't with us, but because of him, we have James and Ian...Sean sent them to us, we know that!

I did get my six children after all!