



# FAMILIES FORWARD

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Growing up, our siblings are sometimes our best friends. For many of the children entering foster care, their sibling may also be their caretaker, their protector and their source of comfort. Now imagine going through potentially the biggest and scariest transition of your life, being removed from the only home you've ever known, without that sibling. Unfortunately, this is the reality for many foster children. Due to limited foster home availability, siblings are often separated in order to find placement.

How can you help? Spread the word about fostering! Consider expanding your license to accept placement of siblings!

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## OUR GROWING FAMILY

Forever Families would like to congratulate Foster Care Supervisor Rebecca and her husband Nick on the birth of their first child, Emily Ann. Emily made an early arrival on 3/6/21, weighing 6lb 9oz, and measuring 17 inches long. Mom and baby are both healthy and enjoying snuggle time!

Congrats Rebecca, Nick and Emily!



## EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Rachel O'Neill



Rachel initially started at Forever Families in 2020 as an intern, however, due to her work ethic and interest in foster care, she was offered a position as a foster care specialist. She has volunteered to start a resource booklet that will include trainings that will be available to foster parents, birth parents, foster children and social workers. Rachel will soon be graduating with her Masters in Social Work from Wayne State University. In her spare time, Rachel likes being outside when the weather is nice, watching television and spending time with her friends and family. We look forward to her continued success at Forever Families.

# One Family's Foster Journey: **Ashley & PJ**

**Why foster care?** We struggled with infertility and child loss for a long time. Ashley was adopted and we always knew that one day we wanted to give another child a loving family and a better chance at life that Ashley was given and that PJ had wished for. We knew that we could provide a safe and loving home and help the kids in our care. We began our journey into foster care May 1, 2020. That is a day we will never forget because that was the day we knew for the first time that we were on the correct path to expand our family. We had been contemplating going through the process for a little over three years but the timing never seemed right. One day Hulu advertised the movie Instant Family, it resonated with us more than we thought it could and we were off to the races. What's the licensing process like? Going through the licensing process was stressful. Leave it to us to make this decision until there was a global pandemic in full force! Ashley made countless phone calls, gathered and filled out what seemed like endless paperwork, and may have harassed the mayor once (or 4 times) to get what we needed as the pandemic had city offices closed. We got the call on September 3, 2020 that our home was licensed and we were officially open for placement!

**Tell us about your first placement!** Siblings, an 11 year old girl and a 4 year old boy. It has been everything and nothing like we ever expected. We knew things would be difficult, but oh how it has been worth it. Watching them grow and develop has been nothing short of...there are no words. We aren't going to lie, there have been so many trying times and there have been lots of tears of both joy and pain. We wouldn't change a moment of it. We have taught them new skills, shared in their triumphs and soothed them during hard times. Whether it was for 1 day, or the rest of their lives these kids know that they will always find family, love and guidance with us and that there would always be a place in our home and at our table for them. Since being placed with us, the court decided that it is in the children's best interest not to be reunited with their birth parents, so we have begun the adoption process with Forever Families.

**Any advice for other prospective foster parents?** The best advice is that the process is just that, a process. The only way to speed things up is to be ready. The timeline depends on you. The sooner your licensing workers have what they need the sooner they can do their part to get your home open. Also there is no perfect time, just like with biological kids, you are never truly ready just jump in. Take all the classes you can. PRIDE training is great but the other classes fill in a lot of the gaps of things they don't teach in PRIDE. Keep in mind no matter how many classes you take there is no way to prepare for everything, that's why you have your family's team within the agency and your village that you build in your community. USE THEM!! We lean on our team heavily and they never fail us. They help us find resources, and the light on some of the darkest times. Our team keeps us grounded and helps us to keep going on our worst days. They cheer us on and take pride in every triumph. Without them we would be lost. Know what you can handle but also be open to other possibilities. If you are lucky enough to have a great team like ours, they will not give you more than they think you can handle and they may see something within your family that a child in care needs so very much.

Know your limits and use respite if you need it. Remember that you cannot pour from an empty cup! Do one small thing for yourself every day. If you do not practice self-care and do not teach that to all of the children in your care, you are doing yourself and them a disservice. Don't hesitate to go on this incredible journey. The lives you are going to touch and the ones that will touch yours are so far beyond imagination. Focus on the bright days and be the voice for those who feel voiceless. Be a fierce advocate for those in need. If you cannot foster, be an ally, become a respite home, or an alternate caregiver or even just a shoulder to cry on for those who can go and are currently on this journey.

# What else are we up to?

- We currently have 86 foster children in care.
- So far in 2021, we have:
  - Reunified 14 children with their birth parents.
  - Finalized 8 State Ward adoptions.
  - Licensed 2 foster homes.

Shout out to TATIYONNA for her acceptance to MSU!  
GO Green!

## Don't forget about your training hours!

- IEP: A Closer Look
  - Tuesday, April 20th from 6 - 7:00pm OR
  - Tuesday, May 18th from 10 - 11:30am
- Foster Parent Support Group
  - Wednesday, April 28th from 6 - 8pm
- Foster, Adopt & Kinship Conference
  - Thursday, May 13th - Sunday May 16th
  - Several times and topics available

**Email [SNEDWID@Forever-Families.org](mailto:SNEDWID@Forever-Families.org) to Register.**