

## Care To Share Your Story?

“Adoption at its finest – we should all do more!”

By Rena Gerckens

Our story starts with me turning 40 and having those maternal instincts become a true focus of mine. I met my wonderful partner and we traveled a bit while waiting for a call from DYFS to inform us of a fit to start our family. We had an age range of 6 to 8 years old and either a boy or girl – just a child to love.

We applied with DYFS and did everything they asked of us – house inspections, certifications, interviews, fingerprints, training classes and paperwork (lots of paperwork). We received calls weekly about infants and teenagers, but it wasn't just that – none were TPR (Terminated Parental Rights). The terms are something you MUST get down ASAP. I'm just NOT the type to get close to a child and have them taken away from me – I'd be crushed.

I hold such high regard for the people that can offer their home and heart to a child, even if it's just for a couple of months. I tell people that it takes about as long as giving birth to get a child in your home, approximately 9 months from start to finish. That's if you're like me keeping up on it! Don't get me wrong, it's lots of follow-up and checking that you're still active and not letting anything (even if it's small) fall through the cracks.

So I received a call early Monday morning of December 11<sup>th</sup>. DYFS called and said we have a child that fits your criteria – a girl that is 7 and is TPR – that is permanent placement, if you're interested. She quickly added one thing, this girl has a sibling – a brother that is 4, and they would like them together. I was speechless. I had so much to ask and nothing was coming out like all the other times I received calls.

I felt like I was saying so much but I was saying it all in my head. The social worker asked, “Are you there?” It was like it was meant to be...I was smiling from ear to ear and said, “Yes,” then without any hesitation all the questions came pouring out. After she helped calm me a bit we made arrangements to have the children brought over to our home that evening.

Next, I had to make an exciting call to my wife and tell her, “You're going to be a mom and so am I.” She said, “Oh, that's wonderful you got a call. Tell me all about her or him?” I said, “Well, it's both...we're getting a daughter and a son!” We were so excited on the phone...it's actually like being in the hospital waiting for the delivery. I found myself pacing the living room and kitchen staring out the window until the car pulled up.

Then it happened...the car pulled up, lights went out, two kids got out of the car and it was – love at first sight! I opened the door to my “Forever Family!”