

## Showing the Love of Jesus Through Adoption

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before they were ever placed in our home."

"Working as a classroom teacher gave me plenty of practice in loving others' children as my own, setting up environments to help them succeed and thrive, and adjusting when what I thought would work wasn't successful," she says.

The Hoeks saw how God can restore families.

"While the adoption process was going through the court system Kylee's biological father, who was previously unidentified, was named," says Hoek. Kylee started visits with him, and within a year he was given custody of her.

The Hoek family built a strong relationship with Kylee's biological father, and he values that they are an important part of Kylee's life. So, even though the Hoeks did not adopt Kylee, she spends at least two days a week with them.

After 1,141 days in the foster care system, Lily was officially adopted by the Hoek family. She is almost nine years old, and Hoek describes Lily as the bravest girl she knows.

"She's always up to try something new. She is funny, determined, and kind. She loves art, crafting, soccer, and horseback riding," says Hoek.

Kylee, who is almost five, loves to be the center of attention and is decisive.

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We knew from our work as educators that children thrive in safe, consistent, supportive environments and that their greatest need is to experience the love of Jesus. We felt called to provide those things.

— Liz Hoek, alumna

"She makes up songs and dances all day, and she can usually be found in a dress-up princess dress with all the accessories," adds Hoek.

The Hoeks acknowledge that foster care and adoption can be emotionally and mentally challenging. Still, they recognize God's grace amid the challenges and the growth they have experienced. And the rewards are closely tied to the challenges.

"Our kids have grown so much in how they relate to each other, to us, and to



"My training as an educator helped me understand how children develop, mature, and learn," says Liz Hoek. "It also gave me practice in loving others' children as my own."

their peers. Our marriage is stronger than it has ever been, because when life gets hard we have been able to lean into each other, and lean together into our faith," says Hoek.

As adoptive parents, the Hoeks have also

## UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Hoek says that many fostered children and their biological families have never experienced free, unconditional love that asks nothing in return. She and her family found that one of the most surprising things about being foster parents has been the compassion they have come to feel for biological parents.

"We have developed trust with the girls' biological parents, and that relationship has allowed us to minister to them as well," says Hoek.

that adoption for her involves loss and grief."

You do not need to be superhuman or specially called to be a foster parent, she adds. You just need to be willing to show the love of Jesus.

"We are ordinary people who have taken the next steps through doors that God has opened, and he has blessed us beyond what we could have imagined."

BETHANY VAN VOORST