

Frank & Cheryl's Story

Frank and Cheryl Bunten share stories about the foster kids they've cared for like grandparents share stories about their grandchildren: with enthusiasm.

Their devotion to helping children excel is obvious. Aside from stories about the children's interests, accomplishments, and antics, Frank and Cheryl share stories about working with schools to develop support plans for children who are struggling; working with teenage foster youth to help them develop healthy habits; and helping kids get involved in sports, or other activities. This passion and devotion extends beyond the foster kids to include the children's bio-parents.

Recently, Frank and Cheryl began fostering 2 sisters and a brother. Cheryl shared, "The youngest was just 7 days old. Can you imagine, as a mother, giving up your child at just a week old?" She goes on to describe the mother's care in packing suitcases with clothing, toys and blankets.

"That is so uncommon," said Frank. "They typically come to us with just the clothes on their backs, or with their things in a trash bag."

The siblings arrived at the Bunten's home just before Christmas. "The State of Indiana provides a stipend for gifts at the holidays. I called the children's mother and said, 'I don't know what these kids want. Will you go shopping with me?' We shopped together for gifts, and we included her in our Christmas celebration. When there is a holiday, like Valentine's Day, we help the kids with crafts to give her. On her birthday, we invited her to our home so she could celebrate with her kids."

To those who are not familiar with foster care, the idea that a foster parent would help their foster child's biological parents may be surprising. When children placed in foster care, their relationship with their biological parents continues. The goal is typically for the family to be reunited, once the conditions at home have improved. During their time in care, the children's biological parents work to change the circumstances and behaviors that led to the child being removed; and they are often granted supervised visits with their children. And during this time, Frank and Cheryl not only care for their foster children, but also help to maintain a positive relationship between the children and their biological parents.

"It is so valuable to have foster parents support reunification efforts, as Frank and Cheryl do," said Tina Kantner, Adult and Child Licensing Specialist. "Biological parents need to feel their children are being well cared for, and they need to trust the foster parents. In the end, this helps the children."

"We believe that people deserve a second chance. Everyone can make a mistake."
-- Cheryl Bunten



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