

Wishing and Hoping

Sitting on a bench, watching his two kids running through the grass on the Texas Tech University campus, trying to keep them from getting into the water in the fountain, he and his wife enjoy a beautiful afternoon of playing with their family.

"I don't think anything will ever prepare you for this journey. It is very emotional, but very blessed."

Dr. Jon Ulmer is an associate professor at Texas Tech specializing in agricultural education. His wife, Ann Ulmer is a grant administrator at Texas Tech in the College of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources. The couple has gone through many changes and life experiences together throughout their marriage, but nothing like what they are experiencing now.

The Ulmers have recently grown from a small family of two, to a happy family of five.

The Ulmers wanted a family of their own, but years passed without success. With the help of Buckner Children's Home in Lubbock, they became foster parents in October 2011. Not knowing what to expect by becoming foster parents, the Jon and Ann quickly learned it is not easy.

"Nothing is final until it's final," Jon said. "You can not count on anything in the foster system until it is signed on the dotted line."

The Ulmers entered into the system with the intent to adopt a pair of siblings, five years old and under. They received their first foster children in the spring of 2012. They fostered two boys, ages three and four, for three months and then had to return them to their father on Mother's Day.

"It was very emotional," Ann said.

The Ulmer's said that having to lose two children who they had cared for for three months was very difficult. Still wanting to start a family, when the couple was asked if they would take a single child into their home rather than the pair of siblings they had been hoping for, they agreed.

In 2012, the Ulmer's fostered their daughter, Navaeh, whom they have now adopted. Navaeh is now four years old and full of life. It is easy to see the joy she brings Jon and Ann.

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Both agreed by adding this little girl to their life made a huge impact. Their day-to-day schedules as well as their priorities quickly changed.

Pretty soon, the Ulmer's family of three

became a family of four when they made the decision to foster another little boy, Zaden who is two years old. But it didn't end there. The Ulmer's were contacted again and soon became foster parents to another child, Zaden's sixteen-year-old brother Angel. Becoming parents of a teenager has been quite a change for the Ulmers.

Angel is involved in sports and will also be participating in livestock shows this year. The Ulmer's said that they enjoy sharing this fun time in Angel's life with him. "It's cool to have him involved in agriculture at school," Jon said. "It is like I'm back in high school Ag, but on a different side of the table."

Most families grow into their role as parents and have a gradual progression. With foster families, you wake up the next morning and have an instant family at different levels of



growth and maturity.
Now a family of five, a lot has changed in the Ulmer's life. As far as their schedule, the family is always on the go. Also, all of the doctor appointments, CPS visits, licensing agency visits, and court hearings have added another crazy piece to their life.

Dr. Frazee, Tech's Agricultural Education and Communications department chair, said that he believes that both Dr. Ulmer and Ann have found their calling in the parenting and adoption of foster children.

"I think for both John and Ann, the instant family has brought about a new awareness of time management and their priority list," Frazee said. "I believe Jon to be a person of high moral character, he has his values and priorities in the proper prospective with his faith first, family second, and his work third."

Even though this isn't the exact way the Ulmers had their family pictured, they wouldn't change it.
"When we entered into this process, I thought we were going to adopt kids and it was going to be our little family and that hasn't happened it all," Ann said.

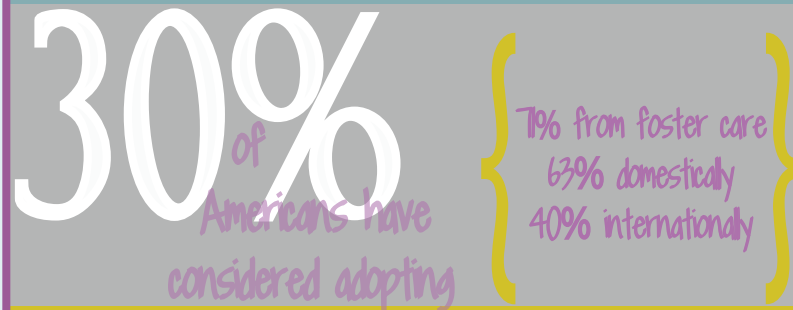
The children's concept of family is very different. Navaeh has birth parent brothers that live with her paternal grandparents and Angel and Zaden have a sister that lives with a different adopted family. They all get together for holidays and birthdays.

"We are all like one big family," Jon said.
As Navaeh and Zaden continue to run and play around campus, you can see the love the Ulmer's have for them is overflowing and the emotional journey has been worth every second. 📷

Jessica Napper
LAMESA, TEXAS



All about adoption



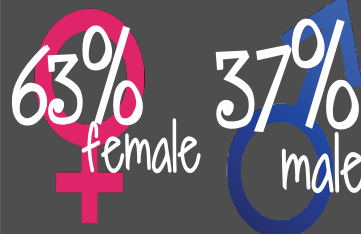
There are currently
104,000

in foster care waiting to be adopted.



adopted stars

gender of children adopted



- marilyn monroe
- bill clinton
- dave thomas
- faith hill
- babe ruth
- eleanor roosevelt
- steve jobs

Source:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/adoption/sabroad/en/about-us/statistics.html>