

The Falk Family!

REPRESENTATIVE DEFAZIO

I found myself approaching my mid-thirties and had recently become an Auntie (which was SO much fun - as being an Aunt always is). Through my education and work experience, I had become increasingly aware of the need for permanent/forever families for SO many youth within the state of Oregon. I also had a large extended family that I knew would welcome children in and be available to help support their growth and development!

Gio is currently eight years old and Jaycub is currently four years old. Gio and I became a family when he was two and a half years old - and we became a larger family when Jaycub joined us - also at two and a half years old. Gio is my artist - he is creative, loves the outdoors, a great friend and social connector, kind, and very silly! Jaycub is my adventurer - he has a lot of energy and is constantly finding ways in which to exert that energy. He loves being helpful, and loves all things climbing, running, jumping, etc.



The rewards of navigating a family constellation that includes adoption have by far outweighed the difficulties. A few general themes of the difficulties include: being disconnected from the child's early life (some questions may never get answered - or are unknown), loss of information and personal items as children most often have several foster placements before coming to their forever family, and a protracted period of building trust/safety/love between the parent(s) and the child. The rewards of being an adoptive parent and family are overwhelmingly wonderful to me. I tell my boys nearly every day, "I can't believe I get to be your Mama." Building a family in this way has given me a perspective about family constellations that I would not otherwise have.

After watching the movie *Inside Out* for the first time a few years ago - my then six-year-old stated that he wanted to identify the islands that represent our family. We agreed on these: Helpful, Adventurous, Kind, and Silly. And...that really represents us well! We enjoy being outdoors and camping whenever possible - we enjoy being creative, building with our hands, etc. and we enjoy being with our extended family as much as possible! My hope (one of many) for my boys is that they come to understand that family can look anyway they choose for it to look - that their story is beautifully unique!

I am thankful for the folks that I worked with for both of the adoptions of my boys - they were supportive, encouraging, and offered a myriad of resources to be helpful through the process. That said - I recognize that once adoption is finalized it feels that many supports simply close - without helping to provide solid connections to the youth's early part of their story (if able).