

The Hood Family!

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRADER

The idea of adoption can take on many different definitions and appearances. For us, our lives have included legal adoptions of our two youngest sons, as well as the "spirit of adoption" of other families and the starting of a nonprofit to facilitate similar relationships. Here is a little bit of our story...



We have been married for 30 years as of October, and have 3 adult children that all graduated from Oregon City High School. In 2011, we started foster parenting while our children were still at home. The children we fostered were usually infants and toddlers. It was easy to love the little kids, but our hearts began to be moved for the birth parents. The majority of these young adult parents came from very troubled family backgrounds.

We note that a huge reason for our own marriage "success" is because of an older couple from our church named Chet and Barb who were there for us in our early years. They loved and found value in us when we were very immature, selfish, and often found very little value in ourselves. Chet and Barb chose to love us. They weren't paid or related to us, yet they went out of their way to love us. It was unconditional love with a grace that sought us out. We were always welcome at their house and they modeled how to treat others. They never preached to us, but their actions were powerful sermons that helped to change the path we were on.

Because of Chet and Barb's influence, loving these children and parents has become normal and instinctual to us. When we invest in someone's life, we hope they will eventually come to the conclusion that we chose to love. By the process of elimination, birth parents realize that we aren't paid, we aren't related and we aren't legally bound to them like a lawyer. Instead, we hope they conclude that we chose to love them with the love of Christ.

After years of requests ("can you work with more people?"), we started our nonprofit - Hannah Grace Family. We have found a growing group of people who want to join and invest with us in these lives. We are all in need of a "Chet and Barb" in our life. But over time, many people realize that they can also be a "Chet and Barb" on behalf of someone else. At the root, each person is in need of being fully loved by at least one other person, and to fully love at least one person. Adoption is one very practical way to live this out.

The first 16 children that we foster parented all returned to their families. We loved and invested our lives in each of these families with the hope of reunification. We have ongoing relationships with most of them to this day: they are family. The last two children that we cared for were abandoned as babies. We adopted 4½ year old Ethan and are in the process of finalizing 3½ year old Sergio. Ethan and Sergio join our 4-year-old and 3-month-old grandsons, 6-year-old granddaughter, three adult children, and daughter and son-in-laws. WE ARE BLESSED! Ethan and Sergio add so much love and joy to our family. We didn't enter into foster care with the intent to adopt, just the intent to love. The need became apparent with Ethan and Sergio that our love needed to include adoption. We love Ethan and Sergio soo much, but we also are the recipients of so much love from our two littlest sons.

If we can summarize to anyone considering foster care and adoption...to the reader of our story who says, "I'm not qualified", the only essential qualification is the capacity to love.

With love, Jason and Tara Hood