

# The Hearne Family!

## REPRESENTATIVE BENTZ

Twenty years ago, we were a young couple dreaming of filling our home with lots of love and lots of children! I had geared my undergraduate and graduate education around learning how to help children who lived through trauma, neglect, and abandonment. My area of study was clinical social work, and I worked with many children over the years as a trauma therapist. I deeply cared about the children I worked with and wanted to make a true difference in their lives.

In our personal life, nearly a decade passed with no children, as we struggled with infertility, multiple miscarriages, and infant loss. After a long and hard season of heartache and loss, our home quickly became filled with "lots of love and lots of children!"

We had 4 biological children from 2008 to 2013, and then 2 years after our last biological child was born, we adopted a sibling group of 4 brothers. Our biological children had been taught since infancy that our home would be a place where we would welcome children into our family through foster care and adoption, as this had been our desire since getting married. The transition into adoption brought a myriad of emotions and new adventures! While there were times of loneliness and exhaustion amidst trying to keep up with diapers, feedings, bath time, washing clothes, reading to and playing with many children under the age of eight (four of whom were in diapers when we first adopted), the lessons learned through this time in our families` journey were many! We learned on a deeper level, how to be patient when things did not go smoothly. We learned the importance of being intentional with our children and in our marriage. We learned about the power and reward of setting good boundaries with outside activities, learning to say no to things in our life that were not necessary, in order to free us up to love our children well, and give our best selves to them. Over all we learned about having grace toward one another, and that family is forever. These are all lessons our children are also learning as we do life together.

When we adopted our boys, they were very young. Josiah was 5, Elijah was 2, Dominic was 10 months, and in January three months after the older boys came to us, Asher was born and brought directly into our family. Two of our boys spent their early life in foster care until they were adopted by us. Our oldest, Josiah, had been living with his biological mother until age three, when he entered into the foster care system. He was exposed to various traumatic situations, and has shared some of those early childhood memories with us. Violence, drug use by adults in his house and continual unpredictability and chaos were things Josiah remembers as he processes through his fears. One of the biggest ways we have been able to bring comfort to him is to allow him to process his memories out loud when he chooses to, and then to reassure him he will always be our son, that we chose him and his brothers to be our forever children, and that nothing they will ever say or do will stop our love for them and protection over them.

All of our children have different talents and gifts, and it has been a goal of ours to help them discover their talents and gifts by exposing them to various situations where they can learn what they are good at and what they love! Our oldest 2 boys are talented artists, and all four excel in soccer. We also understand the connection that forms when parents spend quality time individually with children. We started the tradition of "dude-dates" and "chick dates" soon after we adopted. This is where either my husband or I will take each child out individually and do an activity together that they choose. Some of their favorites are ice cream and walking the river path together, coffee and reading time at the park, and lunch dates together. Also a favorite is working on house construction projects with dad and making spending money!

We are passionate about keeping siblings groups together in adoption. In addition to keeping sibling groups together, we also believe in strengthening legislation around reducing the time children sit in foster care awaiting permanency. There are many good families that desire to adopt, but barriers can prevent that from happening in a timely manner, and children struggle with feeling undesirable, unwanted, and disconnected from a family unit. This is a tragedy and creates unnecessary trauma in children. We are so thankful our boys are part of our family and cannot imagine life without each and every one of the kids that make up our big, boisterous family!

