



Adoption is a lifelong process  
for children to heal a profound

## Meet the Steimle Family Representative Blumenauer

Adoption through the U.S. foster care system was a logical choice for Kai and Erik Steimle to start their family. Personal concerns about the ethics of both domestic infant and international adoption, combined with the experience of having had an extended family member in foster care, led them in that direction. On their application the Steimles indicated their openness to older children, especially siblings. Erik explains, "We wanted to build a family with kids who needed one, and we were committed to keeping siblings together."

Kai and Erik proudly introduce their new son and daughter, Diondre, age 8, and Laniyah, age 6. This brother and sister had lived in foster care for almost their entire lives before coming to the Steimles at ages 6 and 4. Their adoptions were completed the following year.

With the addition of two active youngsters, the Steimle home has become a bustling place filled with happy noise and laughter. Outgoing and energetic Diondre plays basketball, skis, plays chess, and "absolutely loves" singing in the *Shine Jr. Community Choir*. Inquisitive and athletic Laniyah enjoys dancing, skateboarding, biking, and rock climbing. Like many younger sisters, she has a strong drive to keep up with her big brother.

Kai and Erik are pleased with their community's post adoption services. Due to their children's history, mental health services and special educational supports are required. *Kinship House*, a mental health agency that specializes in foster care, has been extremely helpful. Kai reports, "OHP (Oregon Health Plan) has supported access to excellent mental health services for our children."

The Steimles also found family counseling sessions helpful as the children transitioned into their new home. Erik explains, "Counseling continues to provide them with a safe, neutral space to process the many traumas of their early years and to address the challenges of adjusting to love and stability."

Asked about obstacles they faced in the adoption process, the Steimles recall the long wait and the challenging "matching" process. The couple had applied for over 200 children before being matched with Diondre and Laniyah. Then, because the children were residents of another state, they had to navigate "a difficult interstate placement."

Their experience leads the Steimles to suggest that policymakers update and streamline the ICPC (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children). The current requirements restrict placement across state lines and slow the matching of waiting children with adoptive families.

Asked what adoption means to their family, Kai and Erik agree: "Adoption is ultimately about loss and our ability to love and support one another through that loss." They would like others to understand that adoption is not a one-time event that fixes a problem, but it is a lifelong process for children to heal a profound and meaningful loss.

Diondre recalls the day he realized that he had found his forever family. "It was on my 7<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mom and Dad invited all of my friends from school and had a party for me. I felt loved and that this was my *real* home."