

"I remember when they gave me my first plate of food, and my first kiss.

- Noe, age 8



Meet the Franco Family Senator Merkley

After having raised their daughter Magali, now age 30, Gloria and José Antonio Franco are delighted to still be actively parenting a grade-schooler. Their son Noe, now age 8, came to them at age 2 through foster care, and he never left. The Franco's write, "We have been foster parents for 13 years, and from the day Noe came into our home we knew he was ours."

Gloria and José Antonio became foster parents in order to provide a stable home to a child in need. They collaborated with their local Department of Human Services (DHS) first on their foster care certification and later on Noe's adoption. The family continues to attend the DHS adoptive and foster family support group.

Noe was 4 years old when his adoption occurred. Asked about his earliest memories of becoming part of the Franco family, he reports, "I remember when they gave me my first plate of food, and my first kiss." Now a 3rd grader, Noe attends Brookwood Elementary, a bi-lingual public school. He cites math as his favorite subject. When not busy with school or homework, Noe enjoys basketball, football, and swimming.

Older sister Magali lives at home and therefore provides positive role-modeling daily. A graduate from Portland State University with a degree in community health studies, Magali loves exploring the great Oregon outdoors.

The Franco's enjoy many family activities and traditions. They go out for lunch every Sunday after church. During the summers they host family barbecues in their backyard. After enjoying the great food, the adults relax and converse while the children run around and play with the sprinklers.

Exploring new locations is a priority when the Franco's plan their vacations. Noe especially liked San Diego, known for its spectacular Zoo and Sea World.

Although Noe is the only child in the home, he is not lonely. He has many cousins whom he sees and plays with regularly. His older birth siblings and their children are also an important part of his life. His brother Marvin has five children and his sister Sandy has two. Valuing family connections as they do, the Franco's assist Noe in maintaining a relationship with his birthmother and in understanding that mental illness prevented her from being able to parent him. The two communicate on a regular basis and see each other twice a month.

The Franco's have been pleased with their post adoption medical services. Noe does not have any special needs, so they have not used counseling, mental health services, or special education.

Gloria and José Antonio ask policy-makers to provide more training for child welfare personnel and adequate staffing to meet families' needs. They write, "Caseworkers have huge caseloads and cannot give each foster family and children the care they need. The communication between foster parents and caseworkers is not great; it can take a few days to get a hold of someone. Better training and more workers would be ideal."

Encouraging others to adopt from foster care, the Franco's observe, "There are many children in need of care, love, and a stable family."