

# Meet the Willems Family

*"Adoption means...  
I'm here forever."*

- Greta

**Representative  
Walden**



The multi-cultural, transracial, multi-needs, multi-child Willems family household operates according to the following formula: flexibility + fun=our family.

A labor and delivery nurse for nearly 25 years, Greta Willems has been providing foster care for over a decade, and her home is an approved placement resource for medically fragile children. Greta delights in being a single mom of three rambunctious boys, while also fostering additional children. Her sons, Michael and Jack, were both adopted and she parents Michael's half-brother, Jontae through a guardianship. Michael is involved with enriching activities like Healing Reins therapeutic riding and Special Olympics. He loves video games. Jontae is very social. He is athletic and enjoys sports. Jack is a little spitfire. He loves his iPad and anything with wheels – vroom vroom! The family is excitedly pursuing adoption of a fourth child, specifically seeking one with Down syndrome.

Together, the Willems balance the time, energy and creativity required to advocate and support their collective family needs, including Fetal Alcohol Effects, the autism spectrum, Down syndrome and more. Each family member is an important and integral piece of the family puzzle.

A compassionate person and parent, Greta has always had a heart for being there for others. Keenly aware of the children in foster care who wait for adoptive homes, Greta knew she had the capacity to create an incredible family for the right combination of children. She has a strong and supportive network surrounding her, which strengthens her own parenting.

Adoption is a normal topic in the Willems' family home. They celebrate adoption days and mourn the loss of first families. They have regular discussions about the "unfairness of it all", but Greta is grateful to have welcomed her children home. The children appreciate their new and irreplaceable memories, like their trip to Disneyland. The Willems family is spirited, diverse, inclusive, and fun-loving. They willingly share their big hearts and happy smiles.

Greta's request of Congress – and of people in general – is to be patient with state adoptive families. Just because children do well today, it doesn't mean that they might not struggle tomorrow. Their ups and downs require extra understanding and accommodation from adults. She also wishes that the child welfare system was better able to uphold consistent timelines.

In general, Greta urges to us all to please, "just be nice."