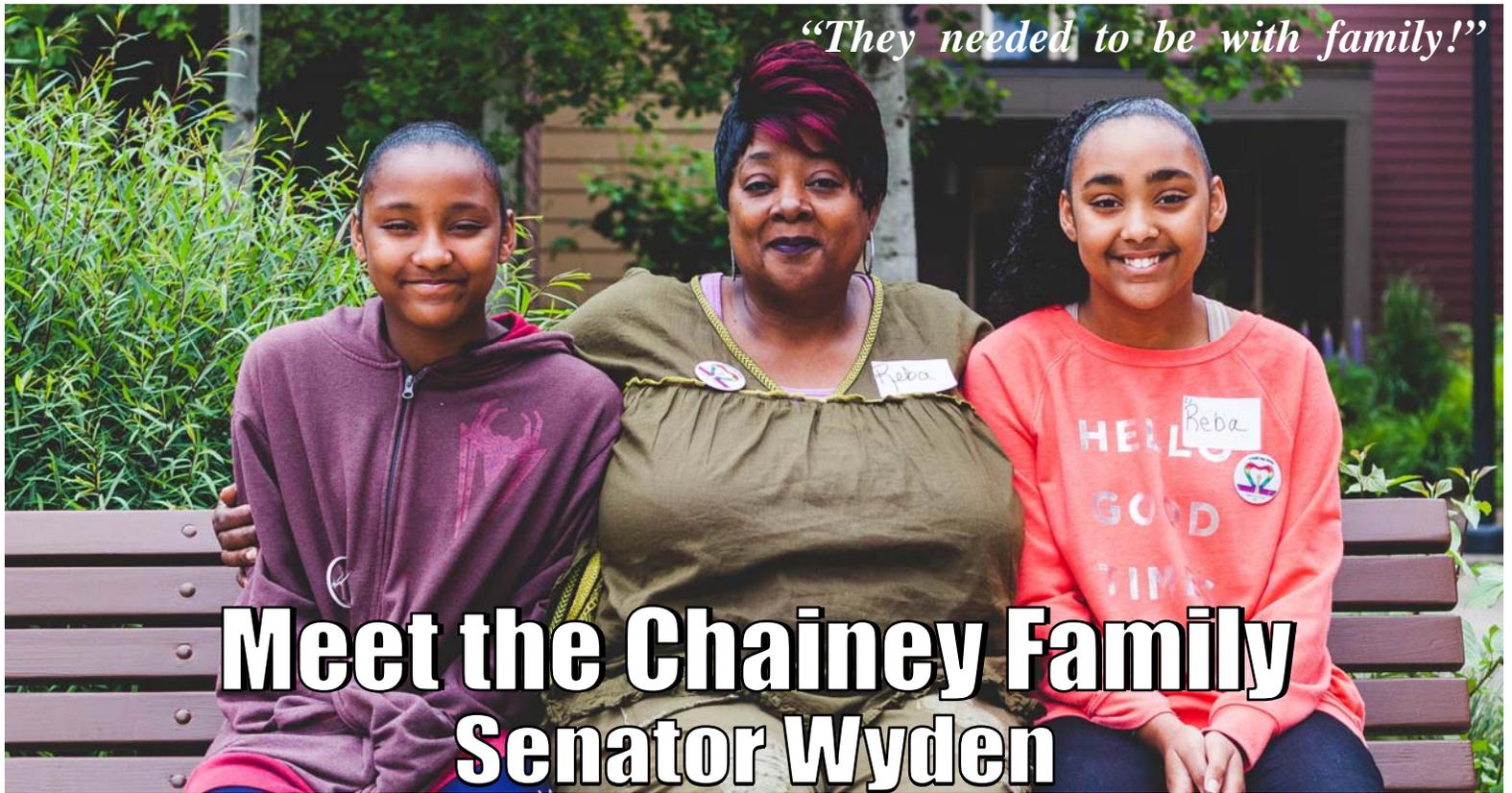


"They needed to be with family!"



Meet the Chainey Family

Senator Wyden

In February of 2013, Reba Chainey received notification that her granddaughters in Oregon had been placed into state custody. Almost immediately, she left her life in California behind and moved north so that she could become their foster parent. The two sisters, Reba and Lydia, were in foster care for 3 ½ months until Grandma Reba finished the certification process. Then they moved in with her.

Asked what motivated her to first foster and later adopt the pair, Reba states emphatically, "I am the girls' paternal grandmother. They needed to be with family!" Fortunately the girls were of like mind. When they first entered foster care and were asked with whom they wanted to live, the two simultaneously exclaimed, "Grandma!"

Reba, now age 13, and Lydia, age 11, are both smart and beautiful. Quiet, artistic Reba loves nature, especially bees, trees, and apples. She has recently taken up photography, which is increasing her sense of curiosity. Artistic and athletic Lydia loves to read. An IEP (Individualized Education Plan) is helping her to improve her speech and behavior. She is gaining confidence in her social skills and is becoming more out-going.

Ms. Chainey felt "totally supported" in her adoption efforts by both the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) as well as by the girls' former foster parents, who continue to be involved in their lives and to provide respite care. DHS helped arrange for post adoption medical and mental health services. Reba and Lydia found the counseling they received at *Kinship House* extremely helpful.

The family has recently begun counseling through *Bridge Meadows*, the community they live in which is composed of other foster and adoptive families. Reba explains, "Counseling helps us to understand and to navigate what is going on in our circle. It helps us to respond with positivity instead of negativity. It gives space and security to talk about what is bothering us, and it allows the girls to be themselves."

Reba also finds encouragement and support through her faith and her church community. The members helped her move into *Bridge Meadows* and they supplied new beds for the girls. Reba writes, "God is first and family is next. I could not do what I do without His strength and guidance."

Ms. Chainey would like policy makers to assure that every adoptive family has the level of support that she received throughout this process, so they don't feel abandoned or become discouraged. "DHS Child Welfare helped me through every step. The caseworkers got things done and made things happen. It was a blessing all the way around."

To others who may be thinking about adoption, Reba writes, "Adoption can be hard but it is so good for the children and for you. Sometimes the kids have gone through a lot so you need to give them love, stability, and the proper guidance. Love is everything!" Reba and Lydia agree wholeheartedly, stating that adoption has been good for them.