

## HONORING, UNITING, AND CELEBRATING FAMILIES

### NIKOLE'S STORY

#### A Foster Family's Story

The day after we were approved to be foster parents, we got the phone call for a 2-day-old baby girl, Nikole Faith. We said yes and began a journey that continues to this day. Nikole's story is one that is layered with emotions of deep joy and also deep sadness. We had Nikole for 7 weeks, and we were filled with joy to be able to return her to her mother and then have the opportunity to get alongside her mother to provide her mother with support. We stayed in close contact with Nikole's mom, Patty, and eventually moved them out of their unsuitable living situation and in with a good friend of ours nearby. Patty began to connect with some of our friends and our church community, and we saw her lift her head up at this new start for her and this precious baby (Patty had 4 other children that she no longer had parental rights for).



Six weeks after we moved Patty and Nikole into their new home, Patty tragically passed away from the flu. It was completely unexpected. Nikole immediately came back into our care and, as we mourned this loss, we worked hard to immediately build a bond with her birth father who wanted custody of her and stepped up to the plate. Nikole was able to transition to him and, 3 years later, she is thriving.

We have remained in close contact with Nikole and her father. It was our very first experience that led us to see how important it is to help these little ones fight for their parents and realize what a huge impact and role we can also play in the lives of the birth families. In honor of Patty, we are launching a nonprofit organization this year that will work in partnership with Departments of Social Services and other nonprofits to specifically work alongside the mothers and/or fathers of children who enter foster care. The organization is called Patty's Hope. We know one day we will be the ones to tell Nikole the story of what her mom was like at the end, but we will also share with her how her mom inspired us, and our hearts, to work with the birth families of all the children we foster, and that she is the reason for Patty's Hope.

For more information on how resource parents can prepare for their foster child to return home to his or her birth family, read [How to Say Goodbye to Children in Your Home](#), a guide offered by the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association.



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