

## *It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Connections*

### The "How" and "Why" of Kinship Care Is Love

Patty and Rick had been married for more than 35 years and were approaching their empty-nester stage when they became a kinship placement for six grandchildren.

Having had seven children of their own, Patty and Rick felt they had experience with the needs of a large group of children and did not hesitate to become a kinship placement for their grandchildren. They welcomed their six grandchildren into their modestly sized home with them and another one of their children. Many challenges arose. They had to make dramatic changes in their lives to meet the needs of their grandchildren: They had to take two cars everywhere, create a schedule for sharing one bathroom, and do almost daily grocery shopping. And yet, they still were not done helping. The family agreed to parent two more young people: another grandchild and a son's teenage friend.

Throughout it all, Patty and Rick modeled a loving relationship with the children in their home, while making every effort to support and reinforce the relationships between the children and their birth parents. Without a single harsh word or complaint, Patty and Rick sacrificed day after day to provide the love, support, and guidance needed to move permanency forward.

Despite every effort, the six children could not be reunified with their parents. However, Patty and Rick have obtained permanent guardianship of the children, while continuing to nurture a loving relationship between the children and their birth parents. They are the ideal example of both the "how" and "why" kinship care works.

If you would like to learn more about being a Relative Caregiver in Tennessee, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/topic/relative-caregiver>.



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