

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

### Princess Pickles and the Three Amigos

Our family met quite by accident. Imagine the tiniest cat any of us had ever seen; she couldn't see (conjunctivitis), she had a tear in her stomach, and she weighed 1.5 pounds! Philip, now mine and Kirk's adopted son, had rescued this feline when he was 11 years old from the jowls of a dog. This cat was so weak and fragile that it fit in the palms of his hands. Philip darted to my house when this all began—his foster mom was not home. He knocked on my door, held the cat up in his palms and said, "Please don't let it die!" It broke my heart, and we decided right then and there to take care of it and nurse it back to health. The very next day, I took the cat to the vet, found out the cat was a girl and she was brought into our world as Princess Pickles. But, she doesn't ever throw her title around.



I met Philip 1 week earlier, just before Labor Day 2015. I had him mow my yard; this incident with the cat was the second time I had seen him. The cat grew and thrived much like our would-be family. A relationship was building between Philip, me (Dad), and Kirk (Poppi). I never will forget the day Philip and I were visiting with my next-door neighbor (we call her Grand Ma). Philip was sitting across an old kitchen table from me and blurted out, "You know what, one day you will make a really great dad." My heart swelled, because Kirk and I had always wanted a child. No sooner than the thought ran through my head, our son added, "Maybe you and Kirk could be mine." My heart sank and my brain took over. I certainly didn't want to say anything that would not be able to happen. We left Grand Ma's and Philip went home, which was three houses down, and I raced in to let Kirk know what had happened. We had no idea if we could. Was it even possible? But we knew after hearing our little angel say that, that we would do everything humanly possible to make it happen.

We fostered Philip through the Missouri Department of Social Services, which was the first part of the journey we were on, and we were happy to do so. We did the fostering under kinship, as we all definitely formed a bond due to Princess Pickles. All of us were working really hard to make it happen. Philip was getting ready for the move, and we had our home inspected. We were interviewed, and, I just love saying this, I had the FBI check me out. Okay, okay. It was just a background check.

Phillip came home 3 days before Christmas 2015.

We officially, legally became a family in August 2016. Philip took each of our middle names.

We want the best for him. We teach him things that we think are important and enjoy the family life that we had always wanted. Every time he says, "I love you Dad," I remind myself how lucky I am to be called Dad. There is nothing better on this planet. The same goes for Poppi!

To learn more about Foster Adopt Connect, please visit <https://www.fosteradopt.org/>.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

