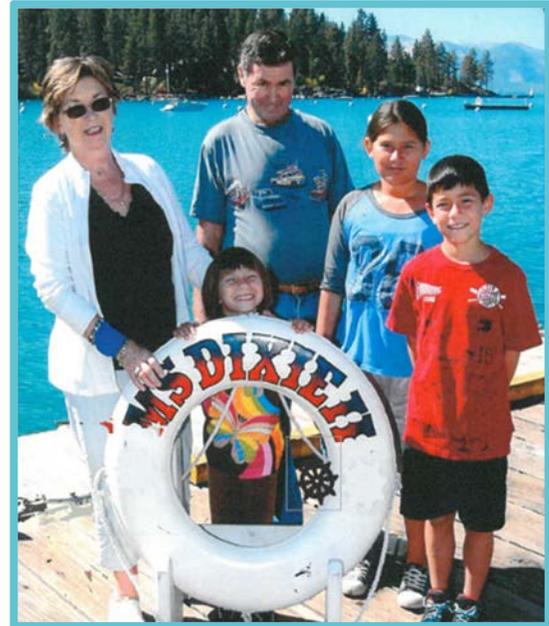


It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Connections

Sacrifice and Resilience: The Face of Kinship Care

In 2010, after long careers of service, Chris and Pat were residing in their recently purchased retirement home when they received notice that their daughter, who struggles with addiction, was unable to safely parent her three children. The children would need to enter foster care if family was not able to care for them. Without reservation, Chris and Pat assumed care of the children, who had endured significant instability, loss, and trauma. Since they were living in an age-restricted community, Chris and Pat had to sell their retirement home and move to a home where their grandchildren could stabilize and heal. They worked with their daughter, the children's mother, to secure guardianship in the children's best interest and have maintained that guardianship for the past 7 years. Chris returned to work part-time to provide the family with necessary supplementary income. The road has been challenging in helping the children to heal, providing for their needs and all that is necessary to help them thrive in life, and navigating the ongoing relationship with their daughter, whose recovery was hard won and tenuous. Chris and Pat have drawn on the support of their village, which includes Lilliput Kinship Support, to manage the highly delicate balance of maintaining their grandchildren's connection with their mother while keeping them physically and mentally safe, a feat they have accomplished out of a fierce love for their family.



While they had hoped their daughter would one day be able to parent her children, they celebrate that she has been able to parent the child who has remained in her care, and they have fully committed to raising their grandchildren. Chris and Pat remain consistently active in Lilliput Kinship Support, attending events, training, support groups, and cafes. They support other kinship caregivers with great care, providing resources, wisdom, and leadership. Chris is active in promoting Kin-Voice in the community. This past year, in May 2017, she travelled to the State Capitol to speak with legislators about Informal Kinship Care, which is kinship caregivers who have stepped in to care for their relative's children who were at risk of entering foster care. She spoke to the innumerable barriers and challenges they face, which include piecing together support throughout the community and the resources available to help them survive. Chris spoke on behalf of all kinship caregivers to pass the Emergency Childcare Bridge Program. In June 2017, Chris graduated from the Leadership Academy of Parent Voices, where she learned skills that would help her better advocate and lobby for kinship caregivers. In July 2017, the family was forced to move from their rental home of 7 years. Exhausted but accomplished, Chris sank into a chair at Lilliput Kinship Center and recalled how this move was so much less traumatic for the children because they had learned to trust that they were stable and safe. Once again, we witnessed the incredible sacrifice and resilience of this very special family: the face of kinship.

To learn more about building a strong foundation for children with Lilliput Families, visit <http://www.lilliput.org/>.



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