

Relative and Kin Connections: Keeping Families Strong

Raising my Siblings with Love and Support, CO

My name is Sistina and growing up was rough. My siblings and I grew up in a home with drug and alcohol abuse and, because my parents were never around, I had to raise my siblings at a very young age. I knew in my heart that I would end up having to care for them when I got older. I also knew I didn't want to follow my parents' path. I wanted to look at the other side of life and make something of my life. As time went on, I ended up being put into foster care twice,



the last time I was 16. As soon as I was 18, I aged out and started my own family. Right after my son was born, I took in the youngest of siblings age 2, 6, 8, and 12. I cared for them on and off until they were placed back into foster care as my mother took them to Denver and couldn't care for them anymore. They stayed in foster care from 2014 to 2016. At that point, my mom had given up on them, and my dad was homeless and couldn't care for himself. I had moved into a nicer home and had a full-time job working as a cook. It was a passion of mine to become a chef. It was 2 months into my new job that I got a call from a caseworker saying that if no one of my family could step up and take the kids, they would be put up for adoption. With adoption there was a possibility I'd never see them again. I couldn't allow that; I couldn't imagine them thinking I would give up on them as well. I agreed to take them in with no hesitation. I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but I don't regret any of it.

We moved into a bigger home and met with one of the greatest foster coordinator caseworkers, Janis. We talked about the process of adoption and how it would benefit me if I became their foster parent before adoption. As I had my own son, worked a full-time, job and just took in four of my younger siblings, money was tight. I started the process of fostering, I took a lot of training classes, signed and still sign so much paperwork, and met a lot of amazing people who have been nothing but supportive and helpful. As soon as I got my certificate, it was a path to get them all the help they needed from speech therapy to mental health therapy to neuropsychology evaluations to braces so my younger sister can have beautiful teeth. I am, still fostering them and, because this process hasn't been easy, the

adoption has been pushed out. My goal is to adopt them no matter what and raise them the way I wish I would have been raised. Kids who have been through traumatic events, I will admit, have a hard interior. My goal is to help them feel loved and wanted in this world--a world that seems like an endless road of loops and tasks. I want them to stay with me on this path and not end up like our other siblings, who chose lifestyles I can't accept. It's been a long process, but we'll get there when the time is right. I will keep pushing because these kids deserve it and one day, they will be legally mine so all the paperwork and appointments will have been worth it. Having support not only for the kids but yourself will get you a long way, someday will be tougher than others but push through. It's worth it in the end.

Sistina is a foster parent with the Colorado Department of Human Services. To learn more about how to become a foster parent with CDHS, visit its [website](#).



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