

Home is where the heart is: Step-sisters experience the impact of fostering

by junior Halle Haack

One 4 a.m. phone call changed the lives of juniors Emily Headington and Caitlyn O'Malley forever.

"In a years span, you get so close to them. You feel like their actual sibling; you can't picture a life without them. The hardest part was to know that, yes, they are leaving, but its to benefit them. It's hard to think of them instead of myself and what I want. I wanted them to stay, but in the long run it would benefit them to get a family. It was knowing they can't stay."

- junior Caitlyn O' Malley

old girl and five-year-old boy became the newest additions to their blended family.

This change didn't come without struggle. For the first few months, the girl, who was distant and shy, struggled with socialization, while the boy, who weighed 101 pounds, struggled with health. Both simply did not know what "normal" was.

Over time, the foster children transitioned into a new normal with the help of Headington and O'Malley.

Typically, when the Department of Human Services calls with a foster placement, families are faced with an on-the-spot decision: accept or decline. "Accept" is exactly what the parents of these step-sisters did. As a result, out of the 28,764 children in the foster system in Black Hawk County, a four-year-

By the end of their 11 month placement in the home, the young girl became more outgoing, and the boy had lost 50 pounds and gained a newfound confidence.

"You're making a difference in someone's life, and it's cool to be a part of that," said O'Malley.

As much as the step-sisters impacted the lives of their foster kids, the kids had an equal impact on them. After witnessing situations faced by their foster siblings, a further sense of gratefulness stirred within the Hudson juniors.

"It showed me how thankful I should be for what I have, the family that I have, and what I'm able to do," said Headington.

Not only did this time change their mindsets but their family dynamic, too. "By being a blended family, having foster kids brought us all together," said O'Malley, "It was something that we all could focus on and spend time together."

The experience also made the future path for Headington clear.

Said Headington, "When I think about my future, I see fostering," said Headington. "I know that's what I want to do."

"It might be hard saying goodbye, trying to keep the kids under control, but they need someone. Without good people to do it, they will have no one. It's worth it."

- junior Emily Headington



photo courtesy of Emily Headington

Dan O'Malley (father/step-father), Erin O'Malley (sister; Hudson Class of 2018), junior Emily Headington, junior Caitlyn O'Malley, and Brenda O'Malley (mother/step-mother)

Q&A:

by junior Hannah Tjepkes

Former Hudson teacher Derek Kimball founded an organization called Cedar Valley Angels in 2018. He answers questions regarding how we can contact his organization and help foster.

Q: How can you get ahold of his organization?

A: www.cedarvalleyangels.org has an assortment of information. 319-939-1909 or info@cedarvalleyangels.org are best for general questions.

Q: How does your organization help those who foster?

A: We partner foster families with Love Box Groups. These groups come alongside foster parents in intentional giving, relationship building, and mentorship. Monthly, Love Box leaders spend time with the family and also bring a box full of things for them (needs and/or wants). They can run errands for them, make meals, play games, attend events, or do whatever else the foster family feels they can't do alone. Our staff walks with volunteers to train them and monitor each match's success. We offer suggestions, use our connections, and find ways we can to meet any needs that families have.

STRANGE OBSESSIONS

by senior Harley Schley



photo courtesy of Nancy Uden

High school math teacher Nancy Uden is obsessed with purchasing **shoes**. Uden said she sometimes spends up to **two hours** looking online for new shoes and seems to buy a new pair **every month**. To date, she claims to own **80+ pairs**.



Junior Regan Reichert is obsessed about **eating a piece of candy every morning**. Her favorite type of candy to eat is **Three Musketeers**. If she doesn't eat a piece of candy, she **craves it** and feels unhappy. But, after getting her fix, she feels **satisfied**.



"If something doesn't clean, I don't like it, I get anxious. The mess doesn't last too long, because I'm right on top of it."

High school P.E. teacher Sean Leonard has an obsessive **need to clean daily**. He's such a neat freak that he gets **anxious** when his four-year-old son put his **pillows on the floor** when playing. Leonard has decided to **teach his son** to help clean by getting him a **tiny vacuum** for Christmas.