



## Opening their home, changing lives

*For Jennifer and Byron Fike, foster care is about providing children a place to feel safe, valued, and at home.*



“Helping a child understand their value is so important because that helps them learn that they are wanted, loved, and that they will be alright.”

For foster parents Jennifer and Byron Fike, that belief guides them each day on their small farm in Medina. As the parents of five children, ages four to seven, all adopted after entering their home through foster care as infants, they understand both the challenges and the deep rewards of foster care.

Their journey began in 1991 when they adopted a daughter, expanding their family into a transcultural one alongside their five older children. That experience left an impression, and when they became empty nesters, Jennifer and Byron decided to open their home again, this time as foster parents.

They began fostering in 2016 with an infant boy, Micah, whom they later adopted. Kaia, Olivia, Vaughn, and Emmy soon followed, with each child arriving as an infant and becoming part of a growing family built on stability, patience, and care.

“We had friends who were foster parents and saw the joy they experienced,” Jennifer said, seated at her kitchen table while the children played outside. “We focus on making each day a good one for the child and

doing the best we can for them. That helps build the confidence they need to heal and grow, and it stays with them for life.”

Still, the Fikes are quick to share that foster care is not something families should navigate alone, as a strong support system is essential. For them, that has included connections with other foster families and support from organizations like the Early Childhood Resource Center, which offers Parent Cafes for support and connection, and access to resources through its HUB HeartLine.

“Lori Grosse (Foster Care HUB Program Manager) has been fantastic,” Byron said. “The support we’ve received has been one piece of a much bigger puzzle. Connecting with other families who understand what you are going through makes a real difference as it reminds you that you are not alone.”

That sense of understanding becomes especially important on hard days.

“Only people who have lived it truly understand what it is like to be a foster parent,” Jennifer said. “When the days are hard, they can be really hard. But this is your child’s life story, and you are along for the ride, so remember that the good times outweigh the bad.”

With years of experience, the Fikes offer honest advice for anyone considering foster care.

“Don’t underestimate what abandonment can do to a child. These children are lost, and some will never find their parents,” Jennifer said. “You can be the best foster family in the world, but you have to humble yourself and remember it is all about the child.”

For the Fikes, that commitment continues to shape their family and their purpose. Each day brings new challenges, but also new moments of connection, growth, and hope.



If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent, call the Early Childhood Resource Center at 330.491.3272, ext. 50727, or visit [www.fosterandadopt.ohio.gov](http://www.fosterandadopt.ohio.gov).