

Model Moms - The Madison Courier Daily Newspaper - Madison, Indiana



Kellie Kummer's Mother's Day celebration is sure to be full of love — and noise — as she and her husband, Tony, care for eight children in their home. Four of the children were born into the family, two were adopted, and two are foster children. Photographed with Kellie are her husband (clockwise from top left), son David, 12, daughters Mia, 15, and Chloe, 10, and sons Elijah, 7, Micah, 4, and Gideon, 2. The Kummings' two foster children are not allowed to be photographed while in the foster child program. (Staff photos by Ken Ritchie/kritchie@madisoncourier.com)

Kellie Kummer's dream came true

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Kellie Kummer always knew she wanted a large family and warned her husband while they were engaged that she wanted eight children.

But that was just an estimate.

Over the last 14 years, they've been parents to nearly 50 kids - foster parents, that is.

All along, Kellie knew she wanted children of her own, yet she also wanted to adopt. Her husband, Tony, agreed.

The couple decided soon after they married to open their home to children in foster care, too. And that choice has generated many questions.

Some people have a misconception that kids in foster care are troublemakers, Kellie said. The public attitude toward "foster kids" is most often incorrect.

"That label is huge," Kellie said. "And the thing is it's not their fault."

The Kummings said some of the children in the system do have issues - either developmental or behavioral - but they attribute the issues to instability in the children's lives from so many moves to different homes.

Children born with addictions to drugs or alcohol and placed in the foster care system are often given a grim diagnosis because of their situation.

"They said he'd never crawl," Kellie said of a former foster child. "We put him on the floor and he was crawling within a week."

The child was walking within a month of living in the Kummings' home.

Still, not all of their cases have an inspirational story. Some children are moved to another foster home to be nearer to family or often return to a questionable situation.

"It's hard," Kellie said of being a foster parent. "That's the hardest part, letting them go back."

Foster care takes adjustment for the entire family, not just the parents. The Kummings' four biological children often formed bonds with the foster children and didn't always understand the system.

When their own children were little, the Kummings told them that "friends" came to visit. They explained those "friends" would have to go back home after a while, which made it easier to understand.

"They bond with our kids before they trust us," Kellie said.

Over the years, two of those "friends" stayed - permanently - with the Kummings.

"We've kept two out of 50," Tony said. The family adopted two of the

