

Happy Mother's Day

MUSCATINE, Iowa – “But what are you going to do when they go home?”

This is undoubtedly the most common question people have asked me in the last year as I showed up around town with various foster kids in tow.

Interestingly, many will add a personal declarative explaining that they couldn't be a foster parent because they would “care too much.”

Many who have run into me lately also know that the kids who

were with me the longest have now gone home. Again, most don't know what to say.

Most offer their condolences. Then it's my turn to not know what to say because I'm not sorry they went home. I'm often sorry they aren't with me, but family reunification had always been our goal.

Then I got a wonderful note from one of my fourth-graders that said it all.

Dear Miss Meyer,

“I am sorry you are sad but I know you are happy, too, because your kids are happy because they get to live with their mom again. But I am sorry they won't be at your house because you love them a lot. Tell them congratulations.”

In a short hand-written, beautifully-decorated construction paper note, she summed up the whole conflict in my heart. This was a time of congratulations, not condolences. I've had hundreds of conversations about this foster care experience and the effect it's had on my life, the kids' lives, and the lives of their parents. After teaching for 15 years, it shouldn't surprise me that the words of a 9-year-old could be the most eloquent as well as the most encompassing.

Like most times of change, it's been scary, bittersweet and often hard. Since the kids' departure, I've had three weeks of singleness. At first, there was a false sense of accomplishment with the final good-bye.

Although it seems I will continue to have a relationship with

the kids, loading them up and dropping them off for the last official time was a scene I had worried about for months.

When the time finally came, it still seemed impossible.

But then I'd forgotten that nothing is impossible – especially when kids are involved. I let them take the lead, watched them dive into their mom's arms with complete faith, and left reminded of the strength of the mommy bond. The kids had no worries and I had no reason not to smile as they danced around their living room as a family. It was clear that this scene didn't need me anymore and that was a good thing.

During the next phase of my foster parenting phase I was overwhelmed with the guilty feeling of renewed freedom as I realized that I can now go back to eating frosting and peanut butter toast for dinner again. I can run errands without respect to bedtimes, nap needs, or the many moods of my mini room-mates.

Then came the curse of the empty nest and my home became a messy reminder of the little people who still lived in my heart but didn't need my toys, my sippy cups, or my bedtime books anymore. Their little socks stopped showing up in my laundry and I moved the bath toys to the closet. A cousin helped me vacuum out the months of car crumbs and I tried to stay busy. Many times I had to resign myself to silly teary moments brought on by things such shiny little shoes, anything Spiderman, and almost every baby I saw.

So I guess the good news is that somewhere in the last 10 months, someone else's kids taught me how to be a “real mom.”

The other good news is that these special kids have watched both women in their worlds work hard, sacrifice, and face some scary moments just for them. They can be proud of their mom and their Amy. In the end, they got a renewed family unit and I got to meet two of the best kids ever born. What more could anyone ask?

Amy Meyer is a local teacher, foster mom, and free-lance writer. She welcomes your suggestions, comments, and fashion tips at amymeyer@machlink.com. Look for her columns on Mondays.

PERSPECTIVE



The Good News
Amy Meyer