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Sun Sentinel

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**T**he Wigglesworth family didn't think that fostering one child would turn them into adoptive parents of two foster children — as a result turning their "original four" into a family of six.

But they said that's what happened after Megan and Lee Wigglesworth brought then 5-week-old Amari and later his brother Kadya into their Jupiter home, with help from the

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week-old Amari and later his brother Karyn into their duplex home, with help from the Palm Beach Gardens campus of Place of Hope, a charitable organization that provides a range of family-oriented services including emergency and long-term foster care.

Place of Hope is supported through the Sun Sentinel Children's Fund, a McCormick Foundation Fund, which benefits South Florida nonprofit organizations that help local families and children in need.

"We were expecting one child for one year and we got two forever," Lee Wiglesworth said.

The brothers, now 1 and 3, joined the couple's older, biological daughters Stevie, 16, and Mikayla, 12, and the family said they can't imagine life without the boys' toys all over their house.

Lee Wiglesworth said the couple first heard about what it takes to be a foster parent while at church. He said over the years he and his wife came up with excuses as to why they couldn't foster a kid.

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But one day, he said the excuses faded away. He said the family together decided to become a foster family. One of the biggest concerns that Lee and Megan Wiglesworth said they had was making sure their daughters wouldn't feel less loved.

Mikayla said she remembers telling her parents that going to the movies less as a family to save a child's life was worth it to her.

"We were their last obstacle," Stevie said of her parents' decision to foster. "They wanted us to know they would still love us."

With their daughters' approval, the family began the process through Place of Hope to become licensed to foster in Sept. 2012. They said the process was arduous, but just minutes after they were approved in Jan. 2013, the family said they received a phone call that a foster child needed a home.



(Maria Lorenzino, Sun Sentinel)

On Jan. 3, 2013, 5-week-old Amari joined the family. Lee Wiglesworth said the family decided to foster for one year, but also decided that if they needed to continue fostering



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for longer than that, they would.

In Amari's case, he was expected to stay in foster care for 996 days, nearly 3 years.

When they found out Amari's birth mother was pregnant again they knew they wanted to bring Kady into their home, too.

Megan Wiglesworth said being a foster parent isn't always easy. She said she took for granted raising her daughters as their parent and being able to make decisions for them. She said when you are a foster parent, the state has total control over decision-making. She said she had to ask permission to get the boys haircuts.

The family also said they were afraid that if they became too attached to the boys, it would be all the more difficult to give them up.

Ultimately, the boys' birth mother surrendered her parental rights and the Wiglesworth family officially grew to six members on Sept. 25.

"We can't imagine life without them anymore," Stevie said. "They are my brothers."

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