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ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Foster care and adoption a challenging but rewarding journey

**BY MANDI HAWKE
AND ASPEN HAWKE**

I'm going to be honest. Adoption is a lot of work. In certain ways we are just like other parents, offering care,



Mandi Hawke

love and support for a child. Yet there is other work involved. We are also helping children work through past abuse, rejection and abandonment. The stories are painful. The reward is incredible.

Understanding if and why you want to adopt is vital. During National Adoption Month we often reflect on our journey with adoption, and how working in youth services has impacted our experience and knowledge. My partner and I have worked with SunServe, an organization that works with the LGBTQ community, for several years. Ultimately, it was our experience with

LGBTQ teens that led us to consider fostering and adoption. Seeing firsthand just how many teenagers needed the love and support of a family helped us better understand the impact we could have on someone's life.



Aspen Hawke

We met our daughter, Jessica, when she was 17. She was a beautiful, inspiring, loving person who had been too afraid to share that with the world. With the help of ChildNet and the National

Youth Advocate Program, a foster care agency that focuses on finding placements for LGBTQ youth, we were able to take on a role beyond mentor. My partner and I adopted our daughter just before her 18th birthday. Most people don't think of teenagers when they consider adoption, but they need just as much love and support as any other foster child. Jessica has come so far since we first

met her and so has our family. The reward of seeing your child blossom because of your support cannot be expressed through words alone.

If you have unconditional love in your heart and a desire to give kids a stable and steadfast home, we would absolutely recommend you consider adoption and connect with an agency like ChildNet.

I can guarantee there will be tough times, but I can also guarantee the benefits will far outweigh those moments. Seeing your child blossom because you have simply offered a home, structure and love is the greatest gift.

For information about becoming an adoptive parent call ChildNet at 954-414-6001 in Broward County or 561-352-2501 in Palm Beach County.

Mandi & Aspen Hawke work with SunServe, an organization that works with the LGBTQ community, for several years. Their work with LGBTQ teens at the organization is what led them to consider adoption and foster care.