

This foster mom adopted 5 siblings and now gives others hope

"All kids deserve to feel valued and loved," says Kate with three of her adopted children



After adopting five siblings out of foster care, Kate Wilson's heart ached for all the other kids still in need of loving homes. So she started an organization to help them feel safe and loved while they wait

From the time she was a young girl, Kate Wilson dreamed of one day being a mom. Once grown, as a youth minister at Capital Church in her hometown of Boise, Idaho, she even helped train foster parents and hosted support groups for them. So at age 35, still unmarried, Kate got to thinking, *That's what I will do. I'll become a foster mom!*

On January 1, 2018, Kate signed up with her state foster care system, and soon took in a 7-year-old girl named Mimi. Kate loved caring for Mimi, and when, several months later, she was asked if she would take in another little girl, Kate happily agreed. But when the car pulled up to drop off the young child at her house, Kate spotted three other kids huddled in the back seat. Asking about them, she was surprised and saddened to learn they were the girl's two brothers and sister, who would be placed in other homes.

I have to take those precious children too, Kate thought. I won't let them be split up.

"No, you're single," the caseworker told her. "Taking in that many kids is not a good idea."

But Kate insisted, and finally won approval. In time, Mimi went back to her birth mother. But then the birth mother of Kate's four newcomers had a baby girl, and Kate took her in as well. It became evident in the first year of fostering the five siblings that their biological mother was unable to care for her children. So Kate followed her heart and, on February 4, 2020, she officially adopted the siblings.

Kate's lifelong dream to be a mom was coming true. But she wanted to do more.

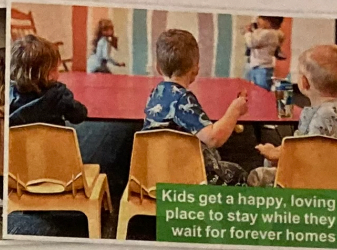
House built with love

Kate continued to take in foster children, but she knew there were still so many others in need of placement. *There should be a nice, welcoming house for them to stay in while they wait, a place where siblings can be kept*

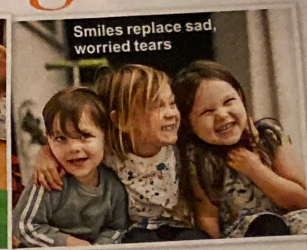
Along with adopting five siblings (here with her), Kate has opened her heart and home to almost 70 foster children



In 2022, Mimi's House opened



Kids get a happy, loving place to stay while they wait for forever homes



Smiles replace sad, worried tears

together, Kate thought, and a dream to open such a house took hold in her heart.

"I will help you," Kate's church friend, Vierra Danielson, told her.

And Foster + Heart was born.

The goal was to purchase

and open an emergency

house for children, but initially,

the new nonprofit

just offered monthly

support for foster parents

by babysitting kids while

they took a break. Foster

+ Heart also held interest

nights at churches to recruit

new foster parents.

Meanwhile, Vierra, who became director

of operations and marketing, and Kate

put out a video about their dream house,

hoping to get donations, which quickly

began flooding in. And

in December 2022, Kate

opened Mimi's House, named

after her first foster child.

As she cut the ribbon,

Kate's heart swelled with

pride, envisioning all the

kids who would find warmth

and safety within its walls.

A safe haven

Mimi's House can provide shelter for up to eight kids of all ages for 90 days while caseworkers look for the

right home. Children, just taken from their parents' home, often arrive distraught and terrified. They are welcomed with new

pajamas, given a comfy bed—something many never had before—and showered with lots of love.

During their stay, they are taken to buy toys and new clothes. Foster + Heart workers often hear from kids:

"I've never had this, but I've always wanted this."

Cecilia Bedolla, a staff member at Mimi's House,

entered foster care at age 16 with her two younger brothers. The boys

got adopted, but Cecilia remained in foster care until she aged out of the system. Now,

she works for Kate to give back the love she received during her time in foster care.

"We want the children to know that no matter what they face, they are never alone."

"I truly understand how it feels to go through this," says Cecilia, now 22. "It's such a vulnerable moment in their life and they don't know what they should do. You have to be that light for them."

That is the ultimate mission of Foster + Heart, says Kate, who is thrilled that this year, she and her staff will be that light for even more children with the opening of a second home, Bubba's House.

"They immediately realize it's a safe place," says Kate, who has fostered almost 70 kids herself. "We want them to know their value and worth, that even though they're going through something hard and scary, their situation doesn't determine who they are—and that no matter what they face, they are never really alone."

—Kellie B. Gormly

3 ways to help foster children!

- 1 Unite siblings!** Research suggests that siblings placed together experience lower risk of failed placements, fewer moves and many emotional benefits. Go to AdoptUSKids.org and click "Adoption & foster care," then click "Ways to help" to find out how you can help keep siblings in foster care together.
- 2 Meet needs!** Visit FosterLove.com and click "Get Involved" for information on how to help supply a child with a bike, school supplies or birthday gifts—or get involved with putting together duffel bags or gift boxes that are sent to kids in need. Can't volunteer? Just click the "Donate" button and all funds will go to help support the cause.
- 3 Give warmth!** If you love to sew, knit or crochet, go to MVOB.org and click "Get involved" to find patterns to sew and information about how you can make a blanket for a child in foster care. Can't sew? Visit OperationWarm.org and click "How To Help" to donate funds for purchasing new coats for children in need this winter.

We'd love to print your inspiring story! Email the story with your name, phone number and a current photo to: WVFeatures@WomensWorldMag.com. Or mail it to: Scoop, *Woman's World*, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. By submitting your story, you are granting *Woman's World* permission to use it and your photo in the print magazine, on our website and/or in future special issue publications. Due to a high volume, we are unable to return submissions received.