

The woman I call mom

By Jamie Wolowski

05/03/2009

Herald Standard

When I was just 2 years old my brother and I were taken from our alcoholic birth mother. I was told that we were covered with cuts, burns and bruises, but I was too young to remember. I never met my birth father.

I entered the foster care system as a baby, and was lucky enough to have only one placement.

The woman that I now call "mom" adopted me at age 7 and we recently celebrated the 14th anniversary of my adoption.

My older brother was fortunate enough to be adopted by a friend of my adoptive mother.

It was probably for the best that we both were adopted and have safe families and people who love us.

That meant we didn't have to be sent from foster home to foster home, changing school often like some kids.

I haven't talked to my brother or my birth mother in more than 10 years, although I have tried to find them.

From what I am told, my birth mother had several other children.

I was very happy to be adopted. The woman who became my "mom" was very nice, easy-going and supportive.

She also continued to provide a foster home to several other children, some with mental health needs.

Unfortunately, when I was 15, I was sexually assaulted by a classmate at school. I struggled to recover from that horrible event and ended up entering a residential treatment facility to recover and gain a feeling of safety again.

My adoptive mother and I stayed close. Following my treatment I moved into a transitional living program until I was 19. I currently live with my fianc?e and am expecting my first child.

I am working, but I would like to go back to school and finish my radiology degree.

I was lucky enough to be adopted and find a safe and stable home to call my own.

But I know that thousands of children are still waiting and many older kids in the system will never find a home at all.

I think it's important to help find more families who can be foster parents, because I think some children, especially those with mental challenges, need more one-on-one attention. And, if we could provide more support to birth parents, especially young parents, perhaps we could prevent many children from ever having to enter the system.

When children can't be reunified with their birth parents, adoption is a wonderful alternative to help kids connect with a family.

I found a woman to call my mom and I know she will love me forever.

I hope all children in foster care have the same chance.

Jamie Wolowski, 20, currently resides in Washington County though she has lived in foster care homes in Greene and Fayette counties. She is engaged in the Porch Light Project, which seeks reform of Pennsylvania's child welfare system to assure a "forever family for every child." Visit the initiative at www.porchlightproject.org