

## Foster Family Feature: Ivy Spohnholz and Troy Bowler

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Ivy Spohnholz's first experience with foster care was as a foster sister starting at age five. Her mom was a passionate advocate for abused children, having survived a brutal family as a child. Her mother and father fostered children for many years and her mother eventually became the President of the Alaska Foster Parents Association so she could advocate for the kids she cared for. As a foster sister, Ivy didn't always understand what her siblings went through but she was happy to welcome in the new sisters and brothers than seemed to come and go.

Later, Ivy met and married Troy Bowler who worked as a social worker. After having two biological children and getting established in their careers, they decided it was time to open their home to a child who needed one. Since they both worked full time, they opted to foster just one child. That child was a 9 year old girl who had experienced things in her life no one should ever have to. A year later, they adopted their

daughter giving her the forever family she craved despite continuing to love and miss her biological family.

Today, Ivy and Troy are proud parents of three teenage girls ages 14-17. It was not always easy, in fact sometimes it was really hard, but they were able to get through the challenges of blending a hurt child into their family with the support of their family, therapists, educators and good friends who gave them the hugs that were sometimes the best remedy for their challenges.

Their adopted daughter will likely always have some challenges, but she is happier than she has ever been. She has good friends, loves her dog Clifford and is doing well in school.

"It is the hardest thing I have ever done," Ivy says with a big laugh. Coming from a three-time marathon finisher who is director of development for The Salvation Army Alaska, serves on the board of directors for the Alaska Children's Trust and finished earning a masters degree a year ago, that is not a small statement. "However, it's probably the best thing that I have ever done. I am proud of all three of my daughters. Our adopted daughter has to work so hard to get through each and every day, but her sisters have had to develop a level of empathy far beyond their years. We are all better people today than we would have been otherwise."

