

Born to be Dad

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He does everything—diapers, night issues, anything. The kids are lucky to have him for a father. Our kids are never going to wonder if their father loves them.

When people see Rob and Beth Streicher with their four children, they often do a double-take.

“They give us a second look, but they’re smiling,” Rob said. “For its population, Port Washington is pretty diverse and accepting.”

Four years ago, the couple had one son Max, who is now 8.



Today, they are also the adoptive parents of African-American siblings Zeke, 3, and Aliyah, 2, and are in the process of adopting their sister, Maryum, who will turn 1 on July 15.

The siblings were adopted through the Milwaukee County adoption and foster-care system.

When the couple decided to adopt, they discussed it with Max, who thought it would be great

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to be a big brother. They considered private and foster-care adoption.

During a women's retreat, Beth said, she prayed about their decision and got the message — foster care.

“Rob said, ‘Are you sure you heard right?’” Beth said.

“He was born to be a dad. The way he relates to kids is wonderful. He just quietly does what needs to be done. I grew up where dad was the breadwinner and mom was the caretaker.

“That's not the kind of dad he is. He does everything — diapers, night issues, anything. The kids are lucky to have him for a father, and I'm so lucky to be his wife. Our kids are never going to wonder if their father loves them. They know he loves them 100%.”

Rob, who is a business analyst, said he can't wait to get home to his family each day and cherishes weekends with them. If he has work to do, he does it after the children are in bed.

“Being with them is definitely a priority,” he said. “I tell them I love them all the time. We also make up words and signs that mean I love you.

“When I drop off Max at school and his buddies are around, he doesn't want me to say, ‘I love you,’ so we give each other the sign. Zeke is really funny. He will make up funny words, like wookie-bookie, and when we ask what it means, he says, ‘I love you.’ So we'll say ‘wookie-bookie’ to each other.”

Rob said he's been changing diapers and taking care of children since he was 13 and his first nephew was born. The youngest of nine siblings, he has 19 nieces and nephews.

Raising four children — with three so close in age — is not what Rob or Beth expected.

“The way our family has grown is not how we initially envisioned, but I wouldn't want it any other way,” Rob said.

When the couple applied for adoption through Milwaukee County in October 2009, they were told it would take at least three to six months for a child. Two weeks later, they got a call that a baby would be available in a week.

The couple had requested that the child be younger than Max, so he could be the big brother, and were delighted with the baby boy.

They picked up Zeke from the hospital when he was two days old.

“We fell in love with him,” Rob said. “He's perfect, just perfect.”

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When they learned his mother was pregnant with Aliyah, they decided to adopt her also to keep the siblings together.

But when the mother became pregnant a third time, they hesitated.

“It wasn’t the number of kids, it was that they were so close together. I didn’t know if we could handle it,” Beth said. “We thought and thought about it and decided it was the right thing to do.

“It was the best thing we did. She’s our ray of sunshine.”

The other children dote on Maryum, Rob said, and the parents sometimes use that as leverage — “You can push Maryum in the swing when you finish your supper.”

The birth parents’ rights to Zeke and Aliyah were terminated fairly quickly, paving the way for adoption. Maryum is still in the foster-care system, but the Streichers hope to adopt her soon.

The couple brought all three siblings home from the hospital. They are the only parents the children know.

Beth said she and Rob trust that they are doing what God intends for them.

“The door opens and you walk through it,” she said.

Beth works two days a week as a speech therapist at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Port Washington. Max will be a third-grader at Dunwiddie Elementary School.

Max said he loves his siblings and being a big brother, but he was a little worried when Zeke came to live with them.

“I thought my mom and dad wouldn’t care about me as much as they used to,” he said. “But they do. They just don’t have as much time as before.”

He said his father is “very caring, funny and the fixer of the family.”

“I really like to build things with him a lot,” Max said. “He helped me make a volcano. He takes things apart and lets me see what’s inside and fixes things.”

Max and his dad planted a vegetable garden and built a fence around it. His father is teaching him to ride a bicycle.

Zeke loves riding his Big Wheel and wrestling with his father. Aliyah likes to be pushed in a swing and turned upside down by her father.

They all like to be chased by dad.

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Rob said he and his wife rely on love and humor to ease tense situations.

“They get in each other’s space and argue, but then a minute later, they’re giggling and playing together,” Rob said.

“We love being around our kids. Ten years ago, I loved to go out and do things on Friday and Saturday nights. Now, I want to stay here and hang out with the kids. I feel very blessed.”

Beth added, “Someone said our life is like a circus, and I said, ‘Yes, but who doesn’t love a circus?’”

THERE IS PLENTY of laughter in the Streicher family. Beth held their daughter Aliyah, while Rob hugged sons Zeke (left) and Max. Maryum could not be photographed for this story because her adoption is not final. Photo by Sam Arendt