



Open for an Inspiring Journey: How Diamond Turned Fostering into Forever



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# CHAMPION

November 2024

## From Foster to Forever



Photos by Alondra Photography



# From *Foster* to *Forever*



**Diamond's Mission to Provide Stability for Youth in Foster Care**

Dear Friends,

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Warmly,

*N. Toscano*

Nancy Toscano, PhD, LCSW  
President + CEO

**D**iamond has always valued the love and connection that comes with being from a big family. But as an adoptive mother of five children under the age of 13, even she couldn't expect the path she took to create a family of her own. She credits UMFS for helping her achieve the beautiful family she has built.

After studying social work at Christopher Newport University, Diamond worked as a behavioral health counselor at an elementary school. This job helped her realize how much she cared about children. It also exposed her to the realities of the foster care system.

"I had kids in my program that would move to a different household, and it would break my heart to see how they were uprooted from their school," Diamond said. "That was when I decided I wanted to be a foster parent to give kids stability until they could reunite with their family."

In 2014 at the age of 22, Diamond bought her first house with three bedrooms. With the extra space, she felt like it was the perfect time to start fostering.

Diamond's goal was to foster one child, so she was surprised when the Newport News Department of Social Services reached out to see if she was open to taking in a sibling set. Eventually, her first placements were able to return to their family, but sibling sets would hold a special place in her heart.

**O**ver the next decade, Diamond fostered 15 children. The children lived with her for anywhere from a few weeks, to several years. Since she began her fostering journey ten years ago, she's never had an empty nest.

As a foster parent, Diamond learned that reunification goals were different for every child, and not all of them could return to their biological families.

**"They brought so much joy to our household. That's how I ended up adopting five kids."**

"I just wanted to be their forever family, I wanted them to be stable," she said. "I created special bonds with the kids, and I wanted to continue to be their mother. That's when I decided that adoption was the right choice for me."

Not long after she adopted her first sibling set, Diamond received a call to foster another sibling set of three, she then went on to adopt those children as well.

"My big heart just wanted to accept them, I couldn't say no," Diamond said. "They brought so much joy to our household. That's how I ended up adopting five kids."

Like many foster and adoptive families at UMFS, Diamond understands the importance of keeping siblings together.

"Growing up in a household full of siblings, I wanted them to have that same love."

Diamond still has room in her heart and home, she is now in the process of adopting a one-month-old infant.

After finalizing the adoptions of her first five children with multiple celebrations and a cruise, Diamond was referred to UMFS for post adoption services. These serves offered at UMFS include case management, education, and peer support groups to help adoptive families thrive long-term,

all free of charge for adoptive families in Virginia.

"UMFS has been so amazing," she said.

At UMFS we believe it takes a village and our network of donors, volunteers, and community partners help families like Diamond's to carry the load.



"During the holidays, which can be a triggering time for the kids, UMFS has fun activities like arts and crafts and pizza nights. They've also helped fulfill the kids' Christmas lists."

UMFS connected Diamond with other adoptive families. "I've met some wonderful people through the support groups that I communicate with on a regular basis," she shared.

"Anytime I've had any questions they were able to support me. Ms. Vineta also reaches out often and is so supportive."

Diamond said these activities and support groups also create opportunities for her children to be around kids with shared experiences that they can relate to.

Diamond wants other potential foster and adoptive parents to know that they can make a difference for Virginia's foster care youth, and they don't have to do it alone. "There's so much support through UMFS," she said.

"Whether you're single or married, I think you can do it. If you're nervous, just go through the process. It's such a rewarding experience." ●

**Explore more of Diamond's Journey**  
Scan the QR Code for additional insights and photos!

