

**FRAGILE BABIES
FIND NURTURING
AND LOVE**

A STORY ABOUT BOARDER BABIES



CHILDREN'S AID
AND FAMILY SERVICES





Children's Aid and Family Services finds loving foster families for Boarder Babies — infants and toddlers whose mothers are unable to care for them for a variety of reasons, including substance abuse and homelessness. If it weren't for this program, these vulnerable babies would be alone in the hospital without the love and nurturing of a family. The goal of the program is family reunification, and this happens about 50 percent of the time. The other babies find permanent families through adoption.

Since 1996, the agency has served more than 150 babies and their families in this program. Following is the story of Patty Dansen, who has been a Boarder Babies foster mother since 2003.

Patty Dansen has the warm, welcoming presence of a mother who has opened her home and heart to several fragile babies. The mother of three biological children, Mrs. Dansen has also fostered eight infants and toddlers through Children's Aid and Family Services, and in 2005 adopted one of the babies, Ladai. Her extensive experience as a foster mother began with Ladai, and has also included James, Lindsay, Jenny, Chris, Daniel, Madison, and Emily. These children have come to her at all ages — from newborn to

toddler — and have stayed with her from two months to two years.

Mrs. Dansen went through training at the agency to help prepare her for the special needs of these vulnerable babies, some of whom were developmentally delayed. The agency staff helped arrange for an array of early intervention services, such as physical and speech therapy, and medical specialists, including cardiologists, pulmonologists, and ophthalmologists.

Without exception, the children have thrived while living with Mrs. Dansen, and her tender loving care has helped prepare them to live with adoptive families or return to their birth families.

Though it can be hard to let the children go, Mrs. Dansen says all of them have gone to loving families. "Ultimately, I want what's best for these kids, and that's having a permanent, loving family to take care of them," she says. "I feel like I'm making a positive difference in their lives, and they in turn are making a positive difference in my life. Just by showing these kids love, you get so much more love back."

Please visit our website to see the many other children in need of a loving family.

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