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 **RaiseAChild, Contributor**  
Let Love Define Family®

# Persistence Made Perfect For These Moms

“Being a parent, your heart has to be open and prepared for those risks. Just because there are risks doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try.”

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ADAM BOUSKA

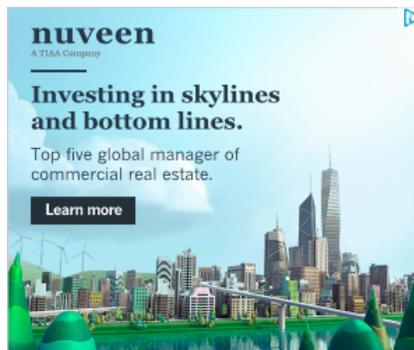
ADAM BOUSKA

To mark National Foster Care Awareness Month in this RaiseAChild “Let Love Define Family®” series installment for Huffington Post Queer Voices, contributing writer Danielle Lescure shares the story of one family’s path to parenthood.

“It’s all in the timing,” as the saying goes. For Anna and Monique Barvir-Boone of Orange County, California timing was indeed everything in the creation of their family and could not have been more perfect, even when it seemed otherwise.

“I look back at how painful it was when we lost our first placement, but if we hadn’t met and parented her that little bit of time we wouldn’t have known her social worker,” Anna shared. “Her social worker wouldn’t have gotten to know us and realized the kind of parents we would be. And we wouldn’t have gotten Willow. So it turned out that our baby was out there, we just had to wait and be ready for her.”

College sweethearts at Notre Dame of Maryland University



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College Sweethearts at Notre Dame of Maryland University, Anna and Monique moved cross-country to Los Angeles in 2006 where Anna received her law degree and Monique obtained a Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy with a specialty in LGBT psychology. They married in 2008 during the 'Summer of Love' after the California Supreme Court reversed the initial ban on gay marriage.

Though becoming parents had always been their desire, the couple was uncertain which path to pursue.

"I'm one of four. I always wanted to have kids. Ask my mom. I think when I was seven, I told her I wanted to have 20 kids. She was so happy!" Anna laughed. "Once I came out and married Mo, I wasn't sure what that was going to look like though I never felt it was impossible because I'm gay. It was 2009 when Mo started playing football for the SoCal Breakers and one of her teammates was in the process of adopting through foster care. Through them, we learned about the process, and it just became our first choice. In August 2011 we started to do the research, got on a waiting list to have an orientation in Los Angeles, and that was the start."



ANNA MO

"Two months later we went to orientation and then we started classes," Monique continued. "We did it every Saturday through March. After the classes end, you get your home inspection and do your paperwork so the state can approve your home.

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We had both of those things done in April.”

Typically, the timeline for a foster home to be finalized and approved or disapproved is within three months. Anna and Monique waited. And waited and waited. What should have taken no more than three months took much longer.

“We started in August 2011 and finally were approved by December 2012,” said Monique.

“We were calling every day for months,” said Anna. “There is nothing we could have done that would have made it go faster; there was just something that happened with our file.

Thankfully, we were really serious about it. I feel like other people, had they been in our situation, would have just abandoned the process. I noticed with our class, we started with like 36 people and by the time we were done it was like 17.”

Their first foster placement came to live with Monique and Anna in March 2013. She was a 13-month-old girl who lived with them through June when she was reunified with a family member. The loss was heartbreaking.

“We were green at the time, being our first placement,” said Anna. “We didn’t really know the questions to ask and we felt the department wasn’t really forthcoming with us at times. That’s what foster care is. Obviously reunification is the number one priority. But we still took it very hard because I really attached to our first placement. We actually went off the foster list for that summer.”

Once again, timing had other plans. In the midst of preparing for Orange County Pride that August, of which Anna was President, they got a phone call.

“What was really cool about what happened was our first foster child adoption social worker, she really liked us. She just saw something in the way that we helped our first placement,” Anna said. “While in our care, she really flourished. And her adoption social worker saw that. So she was really rooting for us.”

“The social worker called us and said ‘I know I’m not your social worker and I know you’re not on the list right now, but there is a baby who was just born. She’s staying with an aunt but the aunt doesn’t have an interest in long-term placement and I think you need her. I think she needs you,’” continued Anna. “And she asked if we wanted to take her even though it really wasn’t our turn. She just had some feeling that this baby needed us.”

That baby was 9-week-old Willow. Social workers informed Monique and Anna from the beginning it was likely they would

be able to adopt her. And they were correct. Parental rights were terminated in April 2014, they signed adoption placement paperwork in May, hence Willow's middle name of May, and she legally became their daughter that September.

"From our experience of our first placement, we were hesitant to 100% believe that it was going to go to adoption," shared Monique. "Our social worker really wanted the I's dotted and T's crossed. Her goal was to protect us from having what happened to our first placement happen again."

"It's not how it's supposed to work, but in this case, it was how it was meant to work," Anna admitted. "And that's what I like to talk about when I tell our family's story. I feel like social workers, and foster parents, and everyone in this entire system a lot of times get a bad rap. But there are so many good stories of social workers who are really doing their job right and are out there for the best interest of all the families and all the children. Our daughter's adoption social worker, she's definitely one of them. She fought very hard to make sure Willow got all the services that she needed, that we got all the support we needed, and that Willow was placed where she was supposed to be. I will be forever thankful for that. Coming to us even knowing we were still trying to heal. She just knew that the time was right. And it was."

But there was one more surprise to come. The Barvir-Boone family moved to Orange County in 2014, which meant they were no longer listed in the Los Angeles foster care system. Content being parents to one child, Anna continued her work as an appellate attorney in constitutional law and Monique became a stay-at-home mom. They felt the only way they might add to their family would be if Willow's birth mother were to have another child, unlikely though it might be.

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Shortly before Christmas last year, Anna was visiting her family in Maryland and shared with them that decision regarding having more children. The very next day, she received a voicemail from a number she didn't recognize. It was the Department of Children and Family Services. The agency had tracked her down to say that Willow's mother had given birth to

another child and they were looking for a placement.

“I’m crying in the Maryland DMV,” said Anna. “I call Mo and it was just like, ‘Of course!’ This is Willow’s little sister. If we have the chance for her be raised with her birth sister, we can’t say no to that. We called the office and they seemed really excited, like this very rarely happens.”

The little one arrived on December 20th, 2016. It’s an unusual situation as in this case they aren’t technically her foster parents.

“In California, we’re considered ‘non-relative extended family members;’” explained Anna. “We’re not licensed through the foster system. But we have Willow, and she has a special status and a right to be with her birth sister. So it’s a little different. She is still in the system but it’s not technically a foster placement.”

“At this point, her father has come forward, asking the court to allow him to parent Willow’s sister. So we’re waiting to see if that happens,” Monique continued. “The next hearing is in May and then we’ll get more information on how it’s going.”

In the meantime, they are preparing themselves for whatever may transpire and enjoying watching the girls grow together.

“It’s tricky. Seeing our daughters together, they’re so strongly bonded that if she were to be reunified with Dad it would be tough, to say the least,” said Anna. “But we’ve made efforts to have Willow and her sister meet their half-brother so if something like that were to happen, we know her family now. If nothing else, that’s one gift we were given. If it ultimately becomes that we are only meant to parent Willow forever, at least we can help her learn a little bit about where she’s from.”





JAMIE DUEMIER

Their journey to parenthood has strengthened their bond as a couple as well, and in many ways their daughters light up their world daily.

“I’ve learned that we’re both really persistent,” said Anna. “As a couple, I find that I can lean on Mo a lot more than I thought I could and I didn’t realize that until we went on this journey.”

“For me individually, it’s surprising how much I enjoy being a parent,” said Monique. “I enjoy seeing when that light bulb comes on and they learn something new. Willow writing her name, learning her letters, or singing a song. That’s awesome.”

“She’s an amazing mom. Watching her it surprises me to see how gentle and caring and good she is with the kids,” shared Anna. “I’ve always known that she was a good person. People in high school called her ‘Mama Mo’ because she’s just someone that listens. You can count on her to be there. But she always told me that she’s not good with kids and nothing could be further from the truth. She’s an amazing mom.”

“Watching Willow, she’s got something people are just drawn to. She’s so gregarious and it makes me so happy to see she’s like that. She was delayed for a long time. She didn’t walk until 18 months and required a lot of therapies, but she seems to have picked up and grown and learned so much in the last year. It’s been so cool to see.”

They advise other potential foster parents to have faith in the process regardless of any bumps along the way.

“If it’s something you really want, be persistent,” advised Monique.

“Any way that you decide to build your family is a risk. You never know,” added Anna. “Being a parent, your heart has to be open and prepared for those risks. Just because there are risks doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try.”

And, most importantly, trust in the timing of it all.

*RaiseAChild is a national 501 (c) 3 nonprofit dedicated to building loving families for foster children. RaiseAChild has engaged more than 3,000 prospective foster and adoptive parents as the nationwide leader in the recruitment and support of LGBT and all prospective parents interested in building families through fostering and adoption.*

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