



□ *Editor's note: In addition to Thanksgiving, November is also National Adoption Month. Ashleigh Noyes, an adoptee since birth, shares her story. She is married to Jason Noyes, a former Imperial resident.*

**By Ashleigh Noyes**  
**Grant Tribune-Sentinel**

Ever since I was a child, when the thought of Thanksgiving came to mind, all I could think about was the smell of turkey from my Grandma Irma's kitchen—great food, family, and long lived traditions.

My mother, Donna, would always mention how she wished we could have a holiday dinner at the farm, however, each year, there we were again in my Grandma Irma's kitchen preparing for another feast, prepared solely by her.

I have since always told myself that the Young Thanksgiving tradition would never change, however, as I approach this year's holiday season, I have come to realize that as life changes, we also must change our traditions to adapt to our ever changing lives.

Not only am I recently married and now have my own family to think about and be thankful for this Thanksgiving season, but my father and mother have both remarried, adding another group of additions and traditions to our expanding family as well.

For the first year with my new husband, I am planning to incorporate new family members and new traditions into our old holiday patterns. This year we are planning our turkey holiday in my childhood home on the farm, which couldn't be more meaningful to me.

Although I have countless memories of my Grandmother teaching me the rules of the kitchen, the smell of turkey from the kitchen I grew up in will be even more special.

This year I hope that I, along with my sisters and my stepmother, will have the opportunity to give back to my Grandmother what she has given to us for so many years.

Since I was a small girl, I have always had a passion for the kitchen. My mother, Donna, and I would bake her famous crescent rolls for each and every holiday or special event. I still cannot make them quite right without her.

Even into adulthood, I continue to learn new things and grow in my love of cooking. For instance, just a year or so ago, my Grandma Irma called me to her house. Upon my arrival I was startled to see a whole chicken laying in her kitchen sink.

As I gave her a startled look, which she was used to by now, she simply said to me, "Ashleigh, it is time you learn to cut up a whole chicken the proper way. There are too many young girls these days who don't know how to cut up a chicken because it is too easy to buy the pieces in the grocery store. So come over here and pick this chicken up and grab this knife and start right here."

Once I had learned that timeless lesson, she sent me home with my own chicken to practice on. Now, I am not fooling you when I say that she called me every day after that to see if I had

cut the chicken yet and how the cutting had gone.

I will never be able to thank her enough for all of her sometimes silly, but always purposeful, lessons in life.

Most people do not know that November is National Adoption Month. People who know me and my sisters, Aspen and Alyssa, also know that we are all adopted.

When I was 18 years old, I met my biological mother, Stefanie, who ironically is now married to my adoptive father, Bruce, and has become a wonderful addition to our family and our traditions as well.

Along with Stefanie, came my biological siblings, Tiffany, Christopher, and Caitlin. So clearly, our family circle will be largely expanded this holiday season. After living my life learning the history of my family, I now have the opportunity to learn even more history.

I have also come to learn that my love for the kitchen not only comes from the way I was raised but also flows in my veins as well, for Stefanie is an amazing cook. Continuing to learn about your own life is something very rare and special.

Adoption is something that not all people understand, and frankly, the only thing people do need to understand is that there are children in the world who have certain individuals who love them enough to let them go, to give the gift of life to another family to make their own.

I could not be more proud to be adopted.

There are so many families in this community that have experienced adoption from one end or the other and until you have been a part of this amazing thing, you really cannot fully understand how much it means to so many people.

I have and always have had a wonderful mother and father, (Donna and Bruce) whom I love dearly, and now as I get older I have the opportunity to develop relationships with more family members who love me just as much.

You can never have too many people to love you. In reality, my story will rarely happen, it is actually almost unimaginable. However, I would not change a minute of any of my life to this day.

We all have struggles and we all have the opportunity to triumph over those struggles to make our lives what we will.

This holiday season I could not be happier and more thankful for what I have. I am blessed with an amazing husband who I love dearly, a beautiful son (Landon) and stepdaughter (Alexa), and a loving family that is continually expanding. As a new employee of the Grant Tribune, I am not only blessed to be working with wonderful people every day but I am thankful for the opportunity to share this story at this holiday season.

I believe that in this day and age, tradition tends to fail us. We tend to overlook the important things in life, which more often than not, are the simple things.

Make the time for your family, don't let the daily stresses of life take away from the moments you could create with your families. Moments that will stay with them for years to come.

As life changes, so do traditions, and this Thanksgiving, thanks to Grandma Irma's well wishes, I plan to take over the Thanksgiving plans.

Hopefully this year, working together, our families can make the perfect Thanksgiving dinner on the farm.

Blessings come in all shapes and sizes, and in my life, I have come to realize that they come disguised in the most unique ways.

Be thankful in your lives, especially for the hardships, for once you overcome those challenges, you will always have a story to tell and a better place to move forward.

Happy Thanksgiving!