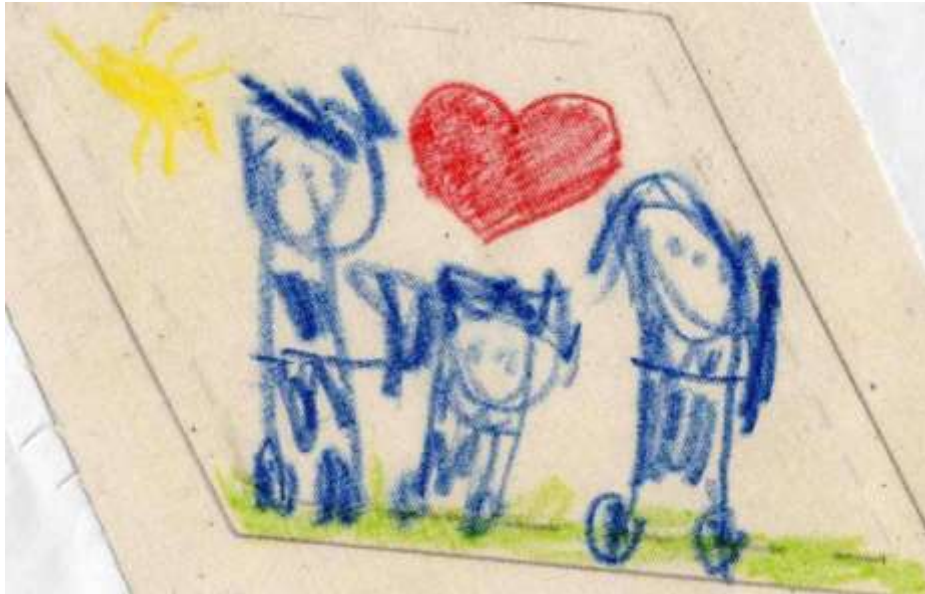


AMBER'S STORY



On February 16, 2000 Amber entered our life as a ten-week-old in need of a new foster home due to illness on the part of her current foster mom. Amber had been placed up for adoption at birth only to have mom change her mind. Amber was then moved between family members and foster respite care when natural mom had become overwhelmed with Amber and her older half-brothers' care. Amber remained in our care until she became an official member of our family on July 18, 2001 at the age of 18 months.

Upon arrival in our lives, Amber was a beautiful little girl who appeared to be locked into herself and non-responsive to those around her. Within a few short weeks her new family had her engaged in our lives, attending and most importantly responding to our hugs and kisses. It has been a rugged battle for this little girl, but she has hung in there with us and now at the age of five, she is full of love and compassion for her family, friends, and all her bugs!! (Yes bugs!)

Amber still tries to retreat into a private little world she once had created for herself, but due to wonderful supports in her place for her, she is making progress each and every day and is preparing for kindergarten in the fall. Just a few weeks ago, Amber asked if she was born in my tummy. That was one of the hardest questions I've ever had to answer for one of my kids. I took a deep breath and told her "She wasn't born in mommy's tummy, but she was born in mommy and daddy's heart!!" She looked at me and gave me a big hug and said, "I love you so much!!" I know there are some more of these harder days to come, but we will take them one day at a time and Amber will always know we are her family.