Many young teenagers in the Illinois child welfare system have had the grueling experience of being separated from their siblings and their families. This was the case for a young girl named Hailie. Hailie entered the system and she and her siblings and were quickly placed into different homes.

In February, 2015 Jeri and Jeremy Larrow, foster parents that had wanted to adopt for three years, saw Hailie’s picture and knew that she was to be their daughter, even seeing a shocking resemblance to Jeremy in Hailie. After inquiring about Hailie, they were able to set up a first meeting through Skype. When they were finally able to meet, Hailie and the Larrows immediately had a connection. During the Skype call, Hailie turned to her caseworker, unaware that the Larrows could hear her and said, “I really like these people.” They really liked her too.

Jeri and Jeremy’s first chance to meet Hailie in person occurred April 6, 2015. The Sunday before that, the Larrows were called to foster a newborn and subsequently had the newborn with them on their first in-person visit. Despite the unplanned circumstances, the connection between Hailie and her new parents couldn’t be dampened. They continued the adoption process, officially adopting Hailie on April 28, 2016, which is also Jeremy’s birthday.

Not wanting to pull Hailie out of school with only a month left, Jeri and Jeremy drove to pick up Hailie every weekend in May to have her stay with them, all the while Hailie was leaving more and more behind at her new parents’ house each time. And on June 10, Hailie made the full move to Peoria with her forever family.
“There was no adjustment period, we just clicked. She (Hailie) has called us Mom and Dad since day one,” said Jeri.

Hailie, now 14 years old, was nervous about adoption at first. She loved the idea of adoption, but was apprehensive when it came to moving further from her siblings, particularly her sister. After spending time with the Larrows, the apprehensiveness fell away and although Hailie is now living in Peoria, she has ongoing contact with her sister in Rockford.

From house hunting to the loss of Jeremy’s father to the classic struggle of who does the dog like best, this family has already been through so much together and is only looking to keep growing as Jeri and Jeremy move forward in adopting another young girl.