

Big sister models patience, service and understanding for siblings

written by Tara Little |



At 17, Courtney Fricks is the oldest child in a blended family of eight. She considers herself a “mini-mom” to baby sister, Madelynne, because unlike her friends, she changes a lot of diapers and totes around a car seat in her car.

Though a senior at Texas High School in Texarkana, Texas, she has always attended St. Edward Church in Texarkana, Ark. with her family.

When her mom, Mary Adams, works late, Fricks cooks dinner with her sister, Kyndal, 13. Then, of course, there are the daily chores like laundry and washing dishes.

“Being the oldest and responsible for just about everybody else right under mom, it teaches you to have a lot of patience,” she said.

In addition to 11-month-old Madelynne and Kyndal, Fricks also has three younger brothers: Grant, 14; Kasen, 11; and Garrett, 8.

Grant and Garrett are the sons of Fricks’ stepdad, Mark Adams, from a previous marriage. They live with their mom and stay with their dad every other weekend.

Fricks’ mom and dad, Mike Fricks, divorced when she was a baby and only recently has she had regular contact with him. When people ask, Fricks says Mark Adams is her dad, but she is also happy to finally get the chance to know her biological dad.

“I like being around him and spending time with him so I can just get to know him, and he’s my dad,” she said.

In particular, brother Kasen has taught Fricks a lot about patience and understanding. He has Asperger syndrome, which is a developmental disorder on the autism spectrum.

His social and emotional awkwardness, bluntness and obsessive behaviors, like asking “a million questions,” challenges Fricks sometimes, but she said she realized that “he can’t help it” so she prefers to be nice and make his “life a little easier.”

She also applies this approach at her high school where there are about 20 students with

developmental disabilities. Though some other students make fun of them, Fricks said she knows them all by name and greets them with kindness.

"You can brighten somebody's day. Why ruin it for them?" she said.

Fricks said she is undecided where she will go to college because she is also undecided about a major. She is considering being an orthopedic surgeon, psychologist or police detective. One thing she does know is that she has always felt God wanted her to help people.

"I know my calling is to be of service to others," she said.

Besides being active in her parish youth group, Fricks and sister, Kyndal, volunteer at the St. Edward Outreach Center, which provides lunch Monday through Friday as well as groceries to the homeless and low-income families.

Fricks is on Student Council and works part-time as a restaurant hostess. She is also a former diocesan Youth Advisory Council member.

She said it is important to her to be a role model for her siblings and others and also stay involved at church and serve those in need.

"You can have this strong faith and you don't have to go out and do everything that everyone else does. And you can still be happy," she said.