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Grateful for... family

Adopted or biological, eight children fill home



JOE MANCHERY/TIMES DISPATCH

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A dozen years ago, Tom and Jen Hanrahan were dealing with the frustration of infertility, wondering if they would ever have a child to enliven their quiet house.

The Hanrahans are the happy parents of eight children — five adopted, three biological — and considering all they've been through, it's easy to see why Thanksgiving is Jen Hanrahan's favorite holiday.

"It's a day I get to sit around, play games and just be thankful for what God's done for us as a family," she said.

Gratitude runs deep for the Hanrahans, who live in Richmond's Fan District in a fine old home they've fixed up to accommodate their family. Tom is grateful that recent renovations have included a water heater that ensures him hot showers.

Tom and Jen met as students in law school at the College of William and Mary. They married and wanted children, but none came. They tried fertility treatments without success. Finally, after four years of marriage, they adopted Isaac as an infant. While finalizing his adoption, they heard about another child who needed a permanent home and adopted Anna, age 4 at the

Tom and Jen Hanrahan have five adopted children and three biological children. In front (left to right) are Jen; Mary, 10, holding John Gilbert, 4 months; and Tom. Daughter Faith (center), 4, hugs mom and dad. In back (left to right) are Joseph, 5; Sarah, 9; Anna, 14; Isaac, 11; and Luke, 3.

Family love

• Pay a video visit to the Hanrahan home. Go to TimesDispatch.com, keyword: gratitude.

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Family

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time, later in 1998.

A month after Anna came home, Jen was surprised to discover she was pregnant. Mary was born in 1999. Then came the adoption of Sarah and Joe. Faith was born in 2004. Luke was adopted in 2007, and John Gilbert made eight when he was born last July.

The Hanrahans also are thankful they couldn't conceive children at first "because I couldn't imagine missing out on the children we've been able to have through adoption," said Jen, who is chairwoman-elect of the board of directors of Children's Home Society of Virginia, an adoption agency.

That their family is racially mixed is an issue only for others.

"My one difficulty is explaining that yes, these are my children, and, yes, we are a family," Jen said. "I'm not a foster mom. I'm not watching other people's children. These are my children. These are my real children."

Jen home-schools the children, Tom works as a staff attorney with the federal court, and the kids have chores, ranging from preparing meals to cleaning up after them. The children practice piano, memorize Bible verses and take Kelby, the family dog, for morning runs. It's not unusual for the kids to gather around the piano and sing and play "Amazing Grace."

"It's so nice to have the time to enjoy time with the kids and my wife," said Tom, who has completed much of the renovation work around the house. "Things are slower, and I've got the logistics taken care of. I've got rooms for 10, and I've got a van big enough for 10."

"I'm also thankful for the different relationships we have. I really enjoy my church, I enjoy the people I work with, and I like my electrician," he said with a smile.

Said Jen: "I don't need anything more to be thankful for. I just need to be more thankful."

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