

# Karen & Ivy



I Love Volleyball, Music, Family Farming and My Village

# Thank You

**Thank you for the courage and selflessness I believe you must possess to consider adoption for your child. I truly believe this a gift of unconditional love and I look forward to honoring you by sharing the love, dreams, hopes and wishes you have for your child's life. Please know that you are in my prayers and I wish you comfort and peace in what must be a difficult time.**



# About Me

**I am a huge animal lover.** I have a dog named Ivy who is a rescue but I grew up on a farm. I grew up with many different animals that we raised, mainly to show at the 4-H fair. Showing at the 4-H fair was always a highlight of the summer for my siblings and I. We had almost every animal on the farm at one point in time including cats, dogs, ducks, geese, chickens, pigs, cows, goats and horses. I remember one summer which was the first year I had goats. I had bought a mama goat from a family friend and she had a baby. This was going to be my first year showing goats at the fair. I had no clue what to do but was willing to try. The day of the show my goat wasn't a huge fan of standing still for judging so I kept having to move his legs and reposition them. My hard work paid off because I got Grand Champion wether (male goat)! I was so excited that I had won first place and so glad I tried something new!



**I am a lover of music and live theater.** I played the piano growing up. I played the flute, piccolo and sang in the choir when I was in high school. In high school I was also able to perform in the yearly musical productions our school would perform. From that stemmed my love for live theater. A couple years ago, I remember going with my friend to a local theater to watch Mary Poppins, which is one of my favorite movies. My friend and I walked to the theater and didn't really have any expectations. We sat and watched the show and were blown away by how well done the show was and how good the performers were. It was an amazing show and we were so glad that we went! Your child will be given the opportunity to learn and grow with music.



**I am a huge sports fan** and love watching most sports. Recently a friend of mine reached out. She had extra Cubs tickets and wanted to know if I wanted them since she wasn't able to use them. I of course said "yes!" and took my niece as she had never been to Wrigley Field and is a lover of the Cubs as well. We drove to the stadium and of course take pictures along the way to show her parents how much fun she was having. When we got to the end of the 9th inning my niece was pretty disappointed because the Cub's had lost. When I was talking with her on the way back to the car I asked her why she was so upset and she said it was because she didn't get to sing the Cubs song. When we got in the car, I turned on the song and rolled down the windows so she could sing the song as loud as she wanted. That made her day and she said it was the best day of her life!



# Passions



I have been involved in a camping ministry since I was 8. Back then, I was a very shy and quiet and I struggled not being with my mom and family. There were **staff members who really went out of their way to be with me and comfort me and forged a strong friendships** that last even now. Because of how this ministry has changed my life I now volunteer 2 weeks of my summer every year. Last year during camp I was building a fire in the outdoor fire ring. One of the boys wanted to help as he said that he had never built a fire before, so I let him help me build the fire. When we were done he said "this is going to be the biggest and best fire!" He was so proud of himself. Everyone who came to the campfire heard him share, "I helped build this fire," with the biggest smile on his face.

I am a huge fan of the outdoors and love a good campfire with friends and family or a good hike through the local state park. In summer of 2019, I was up visiting family in Alaska and we decided to go for a hike. As we got out of the car and got ready to start our hike, people coming off the trail told us that there was a black bear with 2 cubs on one of the trails. We decided to take one of the other trails as we didn't really want to run into them as a bear can get aggressive if you are too near their cubs. We had been walking for about an hour when all of a sudden my older sister told us to stop. We all stopped wondering why and she whispered, "there is the black bear." We slowly backed up a little bit and the black bear just sat there eating something in the grass. **We could see 2 black bear cubs playing off in the distance.** It was one of the coolest experiences I have ever encountered hiking. Your child will have an opportunity to get out and explore nature.



I have had a passion for volleyball since I was 10, watching my mom play volleyball. Volleyball to me is not just about the sport but about teaching teamwork and other skills to be successful in life. Just this past May I played in a volleyball tournament with my brother, sister and brother in law. Going into the tournament we had decided that we were just going to play for fun and enjoy the time we got to spend together. We stepped on the court together and things fell apart pretty quickly. It seemed as though we couldn't do anything right. During our lunch break we all walked to Subway to get a sandwich and my niece and nephew who were there watching us play said "We love watching you guys play, you are so fun to watch." **I wish that passion to play reflected in the scores** as we didn't win a match but we had a great time playing together and created memories that day. Your child will have an opportunity to explore their passions.

# Learning and Trying New Things

I enjoy stepping outside of my comfort zone. My older sister and her family lived in Alaska for a few years and one summer I took a trip with them in Alaska. For something new, we went halibut fishing on a charter boat. When we arrived to get on the boat, the waves were about 10 feet high. I was really nervous but got on the boat and there was no turning back. When we got to our fishing spot I was feeling **a little seasick** from the rocking of the boat. I had taken dramamine before we got on the boat to help prevent seasickness but I wasn't feeling so well. The guide put out the fishing line so I could catch a fish and he told me that all I had to do was crank the reel once and he would do the rest. He reeled in my fish and while **I was excited that I caught a fish, I was more excited to get back on the land!** Your child will have many opportunities to experience new things.



This last year was a year of growth and learning for me. Something that I can always remember as far back as my memory goes is spending time in the fall in the combine riding with my dad as family harvested the crops. This fall things were a little different as my dad got really sick and wasn't able to drive a combine. I moved back home to help and had the opportunity for the first time ever to drive the combine with my uncle. I was sitting in the buddy seat watching for rocks when my uncle looked over to me and said "Would you like to try to dump the combine?" **My heart immediately started pumping faster** and I felt myself get a little bit nervous as **this was something that I had always wanted to do**. Of course I told him "Yes!" We switched seats and I pulled up to the semi as my uncle walked me through the steps that I needed to unload the crop. When I pulled the combine away from the semi to park it for the night, I kept thinking that it was a dream. I called my dad right away because I was so excited and he was so proud of me for helping with the harvest!

I enjoy getting my hands dirty whether outside in the yard or home improvement inside. My most recent project was redoing a bedroom in my parent's house as they live in an old farm house without great insulation in their walls. **My twin sister and I began demolishing the plaster one piece of wood at a time** and making sure to pick up the boards so no one stepped on them. Then my brother and brother-in-law came in with their sledge hammers and just started blasting holes in the plaster and ripping down tons at a time, making a huge mess! It took them 10 minutes to demolish a whole wall while it took my sister and I 10 minutes to demolish a quarter of the wall! The room turned out great and we were pleased with how it turned out until my dad saw it and said, "So now are you going to do the rest of the rooms in the house?"



# Weekdays



I am proud to be a special education teacher for elementary school students. **I have always had a passion for helping students.** One of my favorite things about teaching is that every day is different and you never know what is going to happen or how a student will respond. This year I had a student who was a selective mute and chose not to talk at school. I worked hard all year making him comfortable at school, even taking an introduction to sign language class so I was able to communicate with him using some sign language. I also learned and worked with him on communicating using a board with pictures. Finally, during the last month of school, I got to hear him speak using his voice, not just communicating with pictures or sign language. I felt so happy and excited to finally be able to hear his voice.



On a typical work day I am done with school mid-afternoon which leaves time for me to drop by and see friends or family. One afternoon on my way home from work I saw my sister in law outside playing with her kids on the swing set in their yard. I stopped just to say “Hi” but I ended up staying for a couple of hours playing with the kids and then eating dinner with them. My nephew grabbed my hand after dinner and wanted me to take him back outside. Your child will have a parent that will have **summers off as well as getting off early in the day** so we can spend time enjoying family together.



Getting off early in the day also allows me time to support my students outside of school. I had a student this year who really struggled with behavior. He invited me to his basketball game one evening and when I showed up, he had the biggest smile on his face. The next day at school he came into my classroom room and he reminded me a few times during our session that he saw me at the game. His mom emailed me later in the day and told me that I made his day watching his game. **I will never forget that it's the little things that really make kids feel special.**

# Weekends

Spending time with family is a must for me, so I love supporting my nieces and nephews in their endeavors on the weekends. They all each have their own interests and I enjoy being there as they go through the journey of finding and sharing what they enjoy doing. Just last fall I surprised my niece by attending one of her volleyball tournaments. During the match she was hitting and got a point and was so excited **she looked up in the stands and gave us a thumbs up.** Your child will learn the importance of showing up for the people that matter.



I enjoy exploring local museums. A couple of years ago when I took my nieces and nephews to a local museum for a Marvel exhibit. I remember walking into the exhibit, watching them and they had the biggest smiles on their faces and the smiles stayed on their faces the entire time we were there. They wanted to stop at every super hero figurine and take a picture. We got to Captain America and they told me all about what outfit he wore and why each of the items with him were important, such as his shield. They continued to educate me throughout the rest of the exhibit and **I enjoyed learning about what that they were so excited about.** As we were leaving the exhibit to explore the rest of the museum my nephew turned to me and said, "Thank you for taking us here, it is my favorite place to visit." I felt so happy to be able to share a passion of theirs.



Weekends are also meant to just sit at home and enjoy the company of others, whether that be playing outside in the yard, baking muffins or cookies or just cuddling up on the couch watching a movie. I have learned that **sometimes you just have to slow down and enjoy the small moments with the people you love.** Just last weekend I was spending time outside at home cleaning out the garden beds. My mom stopped over with my nieces and nephews. We finished cleaning out the beds and the kids wanted to play with sidewalk chalk, so we all spent about an hour coloring with chalk, having fun with each other, and listening to music. It was so fun to just enjoy each other's company in the great weather.



# Family Time

If you choose me, your child will have a tight knit family of 2 grandparents, 2 great grandmas, 21 aunts and uncles and **45 cousins**, ages 1 to 17 years old.

**My family has always loved a good road trip.** Growing up my parents bought a motorhome for us to travel in so all of our vacations were to places we could drive to. One of my favorite road trips was our drive to Disney World last spring. I rode with my twin sister and her family. On the drive, my sister suggested we play a game where she would play a Disney song and we had to guess the movie the song came from and what character was singing it. When "Be Our Guest" from *Beauty and the Beast* came on, we all shouted the movie and song and then all went on to list the characters who sang all in a different order so no one really heard what the other was saying next to them. We had so much fun playing the game and it was a great way to pass the time on the drive. Your child will have quality family time at home and on the road.



**My family loves the water** and enjoys taking a day or two each summer at my aunts home on the Mississippi river. We spend time on the boat, catch fish and have a fish fry. Last summer when out on the boat, my aunt asked my nieces and nephews if any of them wanted to ski. My nephew who is a dare devil jumped at the chance. He put on his life jacket and jumped out of the boat and into the water and attached his feet to the board.

As he grabbed the rope we started to pick up speed and watched my nephew stand up! All of us in the boat sat cheering him on and he was so happy! When he got back in the boat, he said "I am going to move here so I can do this every day, I love it out here on the water!"



My family has a variety of ages of kids and so **we always try to find something fun for everyone.** One day my sister, her kids and I were at my Grandma's house visiting. The kids wanted to go outside because it was really nice out so we convinced my Grandma to come outside as well and sit on the porch so we could talk and visit with her while entertaining the kids. My niece was just learning how to play volleyball so we played a game of "keep it off the floor" but with a volleyball so all of the kids could join in the game. They all had so much fun and wanted to play the game again the next time we were at my Grandma's house!





# Traditions



Many of my favorite traditions take place in my favorite season: fall. One of my favorite traditions each year is going to the apple orchard. This past year in unusually warm fall weather, I went to the orchard with my mom, sister, and her 2 kids. As we walked into the orchard my niece saw pony rides and ran as fast as she could, asking her mom if she could ride. My niece and nephew walked into the circle and picked out the pony of their choice. My nephew wanted me to walk next to him while he was on the pony and my niece wanted to do it by herself. When it came time to get off the pony ride, neither wanted to get off. We convinced them to get off by offering them an **apple cider slushie**. They got off the ponies willingly and ran to get a slushie **and an apple cider donut**; 2 of my favorite fall snacks from the orchard. I look forward to learning about your favorite traditions and including them in my gatherings for your child.

Every year we do a family gift exchange which starts Thanksgiving day when everyone anxiously awaits seeing whose name they pull out in the drawing. Once we draw names, all of the kids are immediately telling the person that has them what they want for Christmas. One year my uncle decided that he was going to give all the kids socks and underwear for Christmas. When it came time to open presents we all watched the reactions on their faces. One of my nieces who was about 4 at the time stood up and said, “**This is the worst Christmas present ever!**” and walked away. My uncle to this day still gets all of my nieces and nephews **socks and underwear** for Christmas but now they look forward to getting new socks and underwear every Christmas.



Every summer we have multiple family reunions that we attend. Last summer, three of my siblings and their families were able to attend the reunion and we had a blast **hiking** with the kids as well as **playing in the spring**. This fresh water spring is well loved by our family and the kids love bringing their water bottles and filling up on what they call “Good American Water.”

# My Community



I live on 2 acres in Illinois with room to roam and land to spare. My favorite part of my house is the **front porch**. One morning I was sitting on the porch **listening to the birds chirp** and my nieces and nephews were sleeping as they had stayed the night. One by one they would wake up and come join me on the porch and sit on my lap for a little bit before starting to play with the others. I just sat back and it made my heart so happy to be able to share these experiences with them.



My community has many festivals throughout the year. The most recent festival I attended was a **Cinco De Mayo festival** organized by the school I teach at. They had so many yummy food trucks as well as local vendors and a kid's block where they had bouncy houses and different stations for kids to build, be creative and artistic. One of my favorite things about the festival was the **dancing and traditional dress** worn by the performers. I was even able to watch some of my students dance and they came up to me after the performance was over and saying "Did you see me?" The next day at school they told their friends they saw me at the festival and I loved that they were so excited and proud! Your child will experience and learn about different cultures.



Every year my small town hosts a great 4th of July festival. It is an exciting week filled with a parade, fireworks, concerts and other events. Because my community is full of young growing families this is always a fun time to connect with neighbors and friends. Every year on the **4th of July** we head down and spend the day at the festival, watch the **firefighter water fights** and then sit on the ground and watch the fireworks. This last year we sat and watched the parade and as we were walking back one of my nieces said "Can we come back every year and watch the parade? It is my favorite parade!" It has always been my favorite parade growing up as well and is really great to watch a new generation enjoy it.

# What My Village Says About Me

Karen and I first met at a camp we both attended while growing up but then later became great friends. She cares deeply for everyone she knows. When Karen came to me asking about adoption, I was immediately excited for her as I adopted my daughter from Colombia in 2020. **Karen has the biggest heart and is a great listener.**

During the week we volunteer at camp together, she is always the first one to jump in to help wherever needed. I can think of a specific example where a camper was having a hard time really missing her family. Karen stopped everything she was doing to help that camper feel loved and valued at camp. It was as if no one else existed in the world. She gave her undivided attention to this young camper who left that conversation knowing that someone cared greatly for her.

She even ended up truly enjoying the remainder of her week at camp. I know that Karen is going to love and care greatly for the child that comes into her life. *-Ashley*



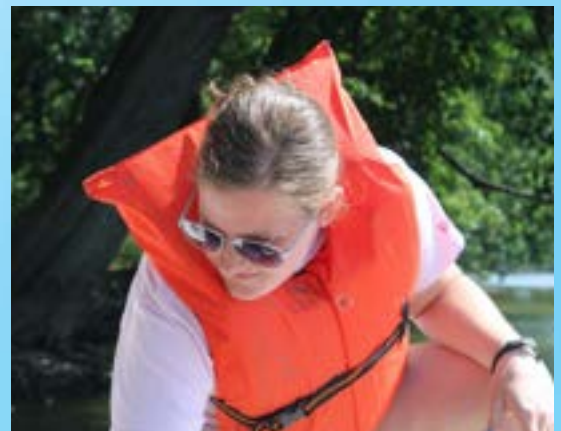
I met Karen over 10 years ago through volleyball. Since then, she's been a key part of my life, and my life has been better as a result of it. The quick way I describe her to others that haven't met her is that she is the type of teacher that parents get excited about when they find out their kid is in her class. **Karen is consistent, kind, loving, and accepting.** One example that comes to mind isn't an example with kids, but one that I believe truly shows the core of how Karen is.

Karen's faith is very important to her, a part of her makeup. I am one of her closest friends, and I am not religious at all. Unfortunately, I have had numerous negative and even traumatic experiences associated with religion. I love how much Karen values her faith and see it show up in how she interacts with others, including me, but I have never felt judged or pushed to be a certain way or felt as if I wasn't enough. If I feel this way as an adult, I can only imagine how a child would feel with her as a parent. I'm thankful to be part of her village. *-Annie*



I have known Karen and her family for decades. I was an older camper when her family first started attending camp. Over the years, I've been her camp counselor and we've worked as camp staff together. **Karen has an incredible ability to remain calm and gracious in all situations.** As canoeing instructors, we worked together to teach 5th and 6th grade girls the basics of canoeing. Karen navigated the tricky waters of instructing adolescent girls with ease. She was able to lead campers into the water keeping everyone safe, teaching them the skills and ensuring they had a great time.

*-Karrie*



# From the Bottom of My Heart

Thank you for taking the time to learn about me and for allowing me to share my life with you through these pages. I cannot thank you enough for considering me as the adoptive parent for your child. I want to acknowledge the courage, strength and selflessness I feel you must possess to be on this journey. Please know that if you choose me, your child will always know the tremendous amount of love you have for them. **I would love to maintain a level of openness with you** that you are comfortable with and I look forward to learning more about you. Thank you again, from the bottom of my heart. I wish you peace in the months ahead.

