

My name is Alison Malika Smith. My story began in Uganda where I was born. At the time due to death of my mother and other circumstances my father could not take care of me. So he decided take me to an orphanage where I could be put up for adoption in hopes that I could have a good life. When I was brought to the orphanage there was a college aged missionary girl from America working there. She was filled with such love and spirit. She would later tell me that we had an instant connection. She went back to the states after several months and even though she was still young started the process to adopt me. Through many amazing circumstances, the hard work of some great people, and a lot of prayer I was able to come over to the states and be adopted a few years later by her and her husband.

My adoptive parents taught me a lot about what it means to be a family. We live in the small Alaskan village community of Port Alsworth, Alaska. Port Alsworth is a tight knit community with a faith-based center. Community members encourage hard work and teach us strive for excellence in everything that we do. My teachers here have always pushed me to be my very best. School was not always easy for me. I had a difficult time reading and keeping up with the other kids that seemed to fly by. What one of my teachers once told me was that I can do anything as long as I never stopped trying. At the time I didn't really believe her but with her help I begin to understand the material. She inspired my drive in school as I was that learning was an amazing thing.

When I was 11 years old my parents decided to adopt three more children to our then family of seven. Life changed incredibly there was a new people that I had to somehow integrate into my life. My parents we're constant in there convictions, their actions, in the love that they showed us endlessly. And on the days when it was hard, when everything seemed too chaotic to stand I will look at my mom in wonder. I'd remember that this was the same woman who had fallen in love with and little girl in Africa and made her a part of her family. My mom taught me that loving people well takes a lot of courage. I wanted to love people the way that she did in the little things; we spoke to my many siblings, did school, played sports and just lived. During my time at home and through my education at school I have learned two very important things; one: even though it may be hard anything is possible,

two: do everything to the best of your ability even when no one is watching, and
three: loving people will take courage but it will be worth it.