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APR 30 2014

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Cassandra Perrin

Ottawa County Way

“You can pick your nose, you can pick your friends, but you can’t pick your family.” Family is an important part of everyone’s life. Whether your family is good or bad, they have molded you into what you are today. For the Bouchard family, molding the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren isn’t hard when you have 12 brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and grandmas and grandpas.

Most people that live in Ottawa County probably went to school with one of the twelve kids or are related to them. Either way they know that this family is larger than life, literally. With more than thirty grandchildren, great grand kids included, there are more than enough ways to get molded by this enormous family. Whether they talk to Aunt Chris, the oldest, or Aunt Kathleen, the youngest, the end result will be that a big family has its good days and bad.

On one side of an average family you may have four or five aunts or uncles, but I have twenty-one aunts and uncles. That is just on one side. I didn’t even count the cousins that are old enough to be my aunt or uncle. I know that it may seem like a hassle to remember everyone, but it’s really not. Chris and Scott, Kurt and Margaret, Bobbie and Jim, Brian and Dawn, Terrie and Randy, Tammy and Mike, Neal, Anita and Bill, Aaron and Melissa, Jocelyn and Jeff (my parents), Kara and John, and Kathleen and Joel. Did I mention that all of them have children and some even grandchildren? The youngest, Kathleen, was an aunt before she was even born.

How crazy is that? The benefit to having such a huge family is that you never run out of people to be there at basketball games, FFA competitions, choir concerts, or school plays. The best thing is that there is always someone to talk to when you are lonely. You never have to look very far to find a friend in this family. Basically we have best friends built right in.

Having such a big family is the best around holidays. So many people come together at the holidays and we all get to mingle and catch up. By having this family tradition, it has molded all of us into being family-oriented people. My grandma's side, the Grossenbachers, also get together every year and I see people I didn't even know were my second cousins. It is always great to meet someone new and swap stories of huge family life. Sometimes the drama of this family is better than the drama on cable television.

Now, I'm not saying that our family is perfect, because it's anything but. We have our moments, but what family doesn't? It's hard to connect with your oldest sister if she is old enough to be your mother, or if your brothers have already moved out by the time you can walk. We have our little niches where we belong, but we all manage to still love each other after a fight or argument. We know that we are family by when we come together after a tragedy, like two years ago when Aaron passed away suddenly. We were all there to support each other and especially to support Grandma and Melissa. We know the great things that we can accomplish when we get together and work as a team.

Ottawa County has been home to my huge family for over seventy-five years. Some have moved away but most have stayed. Do you know why? It's because in Ottawa County you don't have to be related to the Bouchards to have a big family,

the community is one big family. You could walk down the street and you know who this family is. Even if you only have one sister, you still are a part of the Bouchard Family in some way because we live in Ottawa County, and we are proud of that.