



Ashlie Eigner and her sister Brienne Eigner folds the laundry after coming home from the laundromat.



Ashlie Eigner prepares some dinner for her and her siblings. She is pretty proud that she is able to prepare some meals on her own.



While Vanessa Eigner puts on a movie, her daughter Ashlie Eigner puts some pants on her brother in his bedroom.



Ashlie Eigner is nine years old and is the oldest of three in a single parent family.



Ashlie prepares a bath for her brother Christen. She helps with her sister Brienne's bath as well. "I don't mind giving them baths. It's kind of fun," states Ashlie.

TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITY

Photos and story by Dawn Barger

Sitting in a chair across from me is a young girl, nine years old with dull green hair that has faded from its original dyed dark blue colour. For being only nine years old, Ashlie Eigner is well composed and mature for her age. "You're a helper. You've gotta do stuff for her and it's very frustrating when your sister and brother won't listen to you," says Ashlie. Ashlie is the oldest child in a single-parent family. Like any young girl, she has hopes and dreams for when she grows up. "When I grow up I want to be a singer, because I feel I have

a beautiful voice," says Ashlie, with a big smile on her face and a sparkle in her eyes. Smiling, Vanessa Eigner (Ashlie's mother) says calmly, "It's definitely hard doing this on my own." "Financially and emotionally it drains you, but it's worth it. My kids deserve happiness and it means a bit of a struggle so be it." With lots of stress and no help from her children's father emotionally or financially, Eigner says she needs help from her children and other family members around the house. Ashlie takes on a lot of responsibility for only being nine. She helps her mom with her three-year-old brother Christen. She dresses him, bathes him, takes him out to play and gets him snacks and drinks when he needs it.

"It's six o'clock and I have to give Christen his bath. I hope he doesn't splash me this time," Ashlie says with a look of frustration. She walks to the bathroom and runs his bath and Christen comes running in, all excited. She also helps her younger sister Brienne , with her homework. "I am glad my sister helps me with my homework and walks to school with me. She drives me crazy sometimes, but I love her and am glad to have her help me when I need it," Brienne said while smirking at her sister. "I am happy to be the older sister most times. If I help out my mom I get to do special things like stay up late and get little treats here and there. I know she needs my help sometimes and I love her and love to be there for her when she needs me," says Ashlie with a big smile. "I am just glad to have such a great mommy,"



Ashlie Eigner comforts her sick brother Christen. He was sick, had a temperature and needed some comforting. Vanessa Eigner (Christens mom) was busy in the kitchen.