COMMUNITY -





ODHS certification team for Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Gilliam and Wheeler counties are, left to right, Clair Stevenson, Ashley Handley, Mathew Kintner (supervisor) Tracey Gower and Toni Hughes (program manager).

Foster Parent Appreciation Month celebrated by Oregon Department of Human Services in May

■ Submitted by Marvin Hamilton

May was Foster Parent Appreciation month. In 1988, The U.S. government has issued annual proclamations in recognition of National Foster Care Month, celebrated in May, to show appreciation and gratitude to foster parents.

Foster care intends to provide a safe environment for children who temporarily cannot live with their families. Foster care is a part of the constellation of services provided to children and families by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Foster Care Month is a time to recognize how foster care supports and strengthens families, to honor the experiences of the children and young people in foster care, and to show gratitude for the contribution that resource families make to the well-being and safety of children and families throughout Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) theme of the month was "Foster Care Can Strengthen the Whole Family

ODHS, Child Welfare Division, believes that foster care should always be the last possible and temporary option for a child and family when there is a child safety concern. The trauma inflicted on a family by separating them during foster care needs to be carefully considered, said an ODHS press release. If foster care is necessary, reunification should be the primary goal.

In Oregon, there are 5,975 children in foster care and

spoken and never written down.

thousands of resource families who step up to support them and their families. Of those numbers Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Gilliam and Wheeler counties have 61 children in care and there are a total of 47 resource families. Of those families only 20 are general foster care providers. We need more general home care providers as well as providers who are willing to take in children who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Resource families, formerly called foster families or foster parents in Oregon, are affirming and supportive to both the child and their family. Resource families ensure cultural and community connections for children and young adults. They work hard to partner with families to offset the tremendous grief and loss children and young adults experiencing foster care may have. They are partners in achieving the best possible outcomes for families while providing for the safety, health and well-being of the children and young people they're committed to caring for in their home. Resource families in Oregon support family preservation and reunification whenever possible and are also available to provide a permanent and supportive home when needed.

"Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Gilliam and Wheeler counties have a limited amount of homes and the need for more resource (foster families) is great. We do all we can to train and support our families," said an ODHS press release. 'We truly appreciate our families and thank them for all they have done and all they continue to do. We also want to thank those who have been resource/foster parents in the past. We

truly appreciate all your work and love you have showed the children in your home."

In Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Gilliam and Wheeler counties, the certifications team (persons who certify foster and adoptive homes) have been working hard to let the resource families know how much they are appreciated, said an ODHS press release. The certification team handmade and delivered 47 candy bouquets to all of the resource families in all five counties. In each bouquet was a coffee card and a lottery scratch-it ticket. The candy, lottery tickets and coffee cards were provided by donations made by DHS staff in the Dalles and Hood River office.

"There is still a great need for resource families (foster care providers) and as you can see by our numbers we have more children than resource homes," said an ODHS press release. "Our biggest battle is the fight to keep from placing a child in a hotel for temporary lodging due to not having enough homes in the Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Gilliam and Wheeler area."

If you have an interest and want to help care for a child in your area in your home please call 1-800-331-0503 or visit fosterORadopt.com. If you would like to talk to somebody directly and or make a donation to the resource families please call 541-564-4484 and talk to Marvin Hamilton, DHS recruitment and retention.

Marvin Hamilton is ODHS recruitment and retention champion for district 9 and 12.



Standards Link: Research: Use the newspaper to locate information.

