

Sharing the joys and heartache of foster parenting

By REBECCA CASWELL

Tonight in Oregon, approximately 8,000 children fall asleep in a foster home. Certified foster parents provide a refuge — in their homes and in their hearts — for children when they need it the most.

Foster care is a temporary living arrangement for children whose parents or guardians can no longer safely take care of them. The foster parent provides full-time care for the child and works with a team of social workers, therapists, teachers and community partners.

Foster children, from infants to young adults, arrive from a variety of backgrounds and each comes with a unique set of potential and challenges. Homes open to sibling groups are in high demand. Uma-

tilla County's greatest need is placement for boys around age 13.

"Ellen" is a Umatilla County foster mom, who guards the privacy of her wards. People decide to be foster parents for a variety of reasons, she notes, but most share one commonality — they view foster parenting as a calling. "There's nothing convenient about it. We felt called into it. We needed to do it."

What traits are crucial for potential foster parents? According to the Oregon Department of Human Services: patience, a sense of humor, compassion,

open-mindedness and the ability to reach out. Foster parents recognize the importance of family and have a desire to help kids stay in their own neighborhood and communities.



The end goal of the state is reunification of the parent and the child, if possible. To this end, supervised visits between the child and the biological parent are set up on a case-by-case basis. Promot-

ing a bond between parent and child can put everyone at ease. Foster parents can help the child work on something (a picture or other craft) to bring to these visits. Ask yourself, if my child were in foster care, what would I want to know about the foster family?

The path to becoming a certified foster parent takes about two months, is fairly straightforward and includes a Foundations Training course, an application, a background



Serving Morrow, Wheeler, Gilliam, and Grant Counties

Providing dynamic, progressive and diverse supports to improve the well-being of our communities.

Community Counseling Solutions offers a wide variety of behavioral health services

- Individual, family, and group therapy
 - Alcohol and drug treatment
 - 24/7 crisis intervention services
 - Psychiatric consultation
 - Medication management
- Case management for developmental disabilities
- Our Path International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) certified Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy program at Lakeview Heights
- David Romprey Oregon Warmline. Any resident of Oregon may call the toll-free number to receive confidential support from trained peers.

1-800-698-2392



North Morrow County

Boardman Office
P.O. Box 261
104 SW Kinkade Avenue
Boardman, OR 97818
Ph: (541) 481-2911
Fax: (541) 481-2006

South Morrow County

Heppner Office
P.O. Box 469
120 South Main Street
Heppner, OR 97836
Ph: (541) 676-9161
Fax: (541) 676-5662

South Morrow County Lakeview Heights

Secure Residential
Treatment Facility
68982 Willow Creek Road
Heppner, OR 97836
Ph: (541) 676-5143

communitycounselingsolutions.org