

Dear Editor:

Children and teens in our community urgently and immediately need your help. Not only do they lack basic necessities, such as food, clothing and a bed, but what they need most are families willing to open their hearts to provide a safe and nurturing place they can call home.

May is National Foster Care Month, which recognizes foster parents while also asking loving families to embrace a child who is without a home and parents.

You know the importance of children venturing into the world backed by caring parents who will support and steer them down a positive path. Can you imagine how children, who lose or never had that system of support, will face the world on their own?

When law enforcement or the courts remove abused, neglected or delinquent children and teens from their homes, they lose the only home they've ever known. No matter the circumstances in that home, removal is traumatic.

When children enter the protective custody of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), they are placed with foster families. Research shows that children and teens living in a safe and nurturing home feel good about themselves and are better prepared for the future. The challenge for our community is to find citizens willing to step up and mentor and love a child.

More teens are without a home than any other age. Foster parents are necessary to nurture and support the educational and mental health needs of teens, provide normalcy to life, and serve as a role model so they learn the skills to live independently.

In our profession, it's not unusual to hear someone say, "I thought about becoming a foster parent once." Unfortunately, too many never follow up to learn more about foster parenting.

During the observance of National Foster Care Month, now is the time to find out what it takes to become a foster parent by calling 1-800-7PARENT, or 1-800-772-7368. You may discover that you will gain as much from the experience as you give a child. You have the power to make a difference and change the life of a child or teen forever.

Please give your serious consideration. A child's future may depend on your decision.

Sincerely,

Deborah K. Silverman

Western Services Area Administrator

Dept. Health and Human Services