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More foster parents needed, official says

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ALBANY, N.Y. >> Every May, Northern Rivers Family of Services honors foster parents.

The agency, which has roughly 400 foster parents throughout multiple counties, always has a need for foster parents.

“There’s never enough,” said Colleen Vogel, the Director of Recruitment and Retention. “We are always in need, and we’re not just looking for long-term placement foster homes.”

There are several opportunities available to be a foster parent. Northern Rivers Family of Services has developed a “Give Hope a Home” campaign.

“We came up with this campaign to help show families that there’s hope, and that when kids come to us our hope is to get them reunited with their families,” said Vogel. “[It’s about] temporarily giving kids a home in the hopes of reuniting them as quickly as possible with their families.”

Vogel explained why children enter the foster care system.

“Kids come to us because of abuse and neglect, and situations are such where they can’t be in the home because there’s an imminent risk of being hurt again in the future,” said Vogel.

The process of becoming a foster parent takes some time after prospective adults first inquire about the responsibility. There’s an application and a training process. Adults need to be certified to become foster parents through the state, which usually takes a couple months. During that time, however, background checks and paperwork happens.

During the training process, potential foster parents learn about the foster care system, how to deal with different child behaviors, how to maintain connections with the birth families and how to find the best match to make it a positive experience.

This month, offices among 19 counties have hosted picnics to show appreciation for foster parents far and wide. In Saratoga County, Lori Nadeau, a homefinder for Saratoga and Warren counties, took a trip to the Saratoga Farmers Market with foster parents. The role of a homefinder consists of training and recruiting foster agents as well as case management.

There are two ways to begin the process of becoming a foster parent through Northern Rivers Family of Services. There’s a 24-hour number to phone at 1-844-855-CARE, which asks potential foster parents to provide name, phone number and e-mail address for way for the homefinder to connect. Visiting <http://www.northernrivers.org/give-hope-a-home> is another way to inquire.

“We need foster parents to recognize that there’s a need even in their communities that kids and their families are going through a rough time, and they need a safe place to stay and get them back on track and our services are such where we help the child and foster parents but we also help the parents, too,” said Vogel. “We all work together in partnership to reunite these families and make our communities stronger.”

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