

Coffee Notes – November 19, 2007

Topic: Adams County Foster Care

Speakers: Jacque Smith, Adams County Foster Care Recruiter/Trainer
Lori Moore, Foster Parent

Foster Care --- make a difference in someone's life! Guest speaker Jacque Smith began by asking the group, "How many children are in the foster care system?" In the U.S. there are ½ million, 7,000 in Colorado and 750 in Adams County.

Next, she asked the group to guess the number of foster care homes in Adams County. With approximately 750 children in the Adams County Social Service System on any given day, most participants were surprised to hear that in all of Adams County there are only approximately 35 ongoing Foster Families. And of the 750 foster children 1/3 comes from each of the cities of Westminster, Northglenn, Thornton and Federal Heights.

What are the ways that the general public can assist?

You can become a foster care parent or if you have friends who would like to begin the core/basic training for new foster parents, training is free and offered at the Adams County Social Service building located at 7401 North Broadway. There are a wide variety of training topics to assist foster parents deal with diverse situations. One of the biggest problem affecting families in Adams County is methamphetamine use and the children who are innocently in these environments. Parents who are methamphetamine users often stay up for days when using the drug followed by a down period or days of sleep. This leaves small young children with the responsibility of fending for themselves. Many of the children in the system today come from these homes and have learned to fit in the role of the parent at a very early age.

What if you cannot offer your time to be a foster parent?

There are many ways you can assist including to make a donation of products for example, many foster children arrive at their foster home with only the clothes they are wearing. Donations of toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, comb and brush, new underwear and socks are helpful. Also, pajamas are useful as it is comforting for children who have been taken from their birth family to be able to sleep in a new pair of pajamas. All sizes are needed for both genders. Another needed item is diapers. Many foster parents specializing in caring for infants need and appreciate all sizes of disposable diapers for babies and small children.

What is the time span for children in foster homes?

The time varies as often the parent or parents is undergoing treatment to overcome their problem or the demons they are faced with and many times it can take months before

they are able to get the children back if it is even possible.

What is the age of the children in the foster care system?

Children are accepted into the foster care system from as early as birth up to emancipation or 18 years of age in the state of Colorado.

What should someone do if they suspect child abuse or a neighbor who appears to have a problem and is ignoring the care of their children?

It is important to report any suspicious activity to the Child Abuse Report Line 303-412-5212.

For children left in the system or with parents that could not overcome their problems these children are available for adoption. The month of September is National Adoption Month and the fee to adopt these children is minimal or less than 200.00. There's a great difference between the costs of adopting from Social Services and going through other adoption agencies.

Foster Parent, Lori Moore, described her experience as a foster parent. She described it as a fulfilling experience that she and her family all participate in. Her emphasis is in caring for infants and she described it as receiving a small baby with little chance for survival and great needs. She found nurturing a baby to a healthy state in itself is rewarding. Being able to take a small child that will not eat and getting them to eat and gain their first few pounds and become healthier each day is a reward in itself. When she first started the program she mentioned how she really did not want to have anything to do with the birthing parents but throughout the process she has learned that it is most rewarding to see both the child and the mother grow and become healthy.

For more information about the Adams County Foster Program or how you can help, call 303-412-5163.