

NEW HEIGHTS



St. Vincent Catholic Charities
PROVIDING HELP. CREATING HOPE.

Love. Hope.
Foster.

May is Foster Care
Awareness Month!

Inside

Learn how STVCC
is recognizing our
Foster Care program!

stvcc.org • SPRING 2020



*A Spring Message
from the CEO*

Dear Friends,

I hope you had a blessed Lent and Easter!

Spring has sprung, and I am excited to share our latest newsletter, which recognizes and celebrates National Foster Care Awareness Month.

Each May is a time dedicated to raising awareness for the children and youth in foster care. According to The National Foster Care Month Partnership, there are more than 440,000 children and adolescents in foster care in the United States. Foster Care Awareness Month provides an opportunity to shed light on the issues facing these youth and the urgent need to ensure that all children have a safe, loving, stable place to call home. It's also a time to honor the foster parents, families, volunteers, child welfare professionals and you, the members of our community, who strive to help children in foster care lead happy and healthy lives.

Every child needs someone to love them unconditionally and encourage them; everyone needs a tribe of their own, especially those children who feel unloved, alone and uncertain of their future. Throughout this newsletter, you will learn more about the ways you can get involved with our foster care program and make a lasting difference in a child's life.

Last, but certainly not least, I hope and pray you and your families stayed safe and well during the coronavirus pandemic, which proved to be a challenging and unique time. Our agency adjusted and remained focused on balancing two imperatives: we ensured that we took prudent cautions to protect our staff, children, clients and community, while we continued our daily, life-changing work to serve the most vulnerable children and families. Every action we took was with this important balance in mind.

As you're aware, the situation is fluid and will continue to impact our community in evolving ways. While all support is appreciated, financial support will allow us to use your gift to meet our greatest needs. Please consider donating any amount to sustain our critical services in this dynamic time.

As we continue to experience this ever-changing situation together, we remember HOPE. The one thing that is sure and solid is God's hope. With this guiding us, we can look into the future with confidence.

I thank God He has touched the heart of so many of you who give of your time, talent and treasure. We need it now more than ever. Thank you for your continued, faithful support of St. Vincent Catholic Charities.

Gratefully,

Andrea Seyka
Chief Executive Officer

Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).

The mission of St. Vincent Catholic Charities is the work of the Catholic Church, to share the love of Christ by performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

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CHANGE A LIFETIME

INSIDE ST. VINCENT CATHOLIC CHARITIES' (STVCC) FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

THE NEED FOR FOSTER HOMES CONTINUES

to grow, as more than 440,000 children and adolescents are in foster care in the United States. Perhaps you have thought about becoming a foster parent but haven't taken the next step. We're here to help you understand why there's such a need for foster families.

The primary purpose of foster care is to provide a safe and stable environment for a child who cannot be with his or her biological parents. Children who have been uprooted from their homes need a place where they can feel safe. Often, they have suffered from abuse or neglect, and have little idea of what a loving home feels like.

Martha Holben, Assistant Director of Child Welfare, oversees foster care and licensing. She and her team at STVCC are committed to ensuring all children who enter foster care are placed in safe, thriving homes and achieve the primary goal of foster care: reunification with biological families.

"Children enter foster care one way," Martha explains. "An initial investigation begins with a concerned citizen, family member or mandated reporter calling Child Protective Services (CPS) to make a complaint of abuse or neglect."

The CPS investigator has 30 days to thoroughly research and provide details of the family's dynamics and environment. The issues the biological family may be experiencing prevent them from knowing how to be a stable parent and provide a safe atmosphere for the child. As a result, the child doesn't know what a "normal" life looks like.

"After 30 days of research and investigation, the CPS worker will determine if there's a preponderance of evidence to support the complaint," says Martha. "If not, then that family is usually referred to community services, if there's a need, and the case is closed out, however, it's logged and kept for future reference."

If a CPS investigator determines there is enough evidence that puts a child in harm's way, there are three categories a complaint can fall into.

"Foster care becomes involved with a category 1 case, which is the most severe category, meaning the court is now involved because of the severity of abuse and neglect found in the investigation," Martha explains. "I see more vulnerable children entering foster care every day. Unfortunately, I observe younger children

having more trauma needs because they're not able to vocalize what they're seeing, hearing or feeling."

Martha continues: "Everyday we're helping to place foster children, around 6-11 years old, in homes. These are the building block years, and it's mainly because they're starting to open up in school and starting to talk about what's going on in their families."

Foster homes teach children what it means to be a kid and have the task of helping children learn about themselves and the world around them in a positive way after experiencing so much negativity in their lives.

Martha further explains: "We appreciate and need foster families that are willing to work as part of a big team. I often describe foster care as an analogy. The CPS workers are the firefighters that go into the house while it is ablaze, and they are immediately putting out the flames. As foster care workers, we are the ones that are continually trying to rebuild the home, making it safe and secure again for the family to live in."



"What I find to be most helpful and ideal is working with a foster family that wants the biological parents to succeed and that are willing to grow and learn with our help. There certainly might be damage in the family and there might be relationships that are strained, but if you have a foster family that is willing to help rebuild their structure with them, it goes a long way."

It can be eye-opening to see how much pain a child can hold, and it takes patience and commitment from foster families to help them walk through it.

"Every child deserves a loving home. There's no greater reward than seeing the progress that can happen in a child's life when they are loved, safe and secure," says Martha.



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HOW YOU CAN
HELP **COVID 19**
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE
VISIT STVCC.ORG

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May is Foster Care Awareness Month!

If you're thinking of becoming a foster parent, STVCC offers foster care orientations twice a month. You'll learn the most amount of information about the foster care process – and connect with other foster parents.

For those who cannot foster a child, there are other ways Martha suggests you can become involved in helping make a difference in a child's life:

- **Mentor.** "Every child needs a mentor. Children need stable, healthy, happy role models in their life."
- **Relief.** "Offer to send a meal to a family or allow for a respite night, where the families can go out to dinner or the movies."
- **Donate Luggage.** "Most of our kids move their belongings in garbage bags – and it tears them apart. Donations of luggage, suitcases and bags are something we always need so a child can move to a home with dignity and respect."
- **Pray.** "All of our kids and our families need prayers. There are things going on in their life that we'll never know or be able to comprehend. Pray so they know someone is caring for them."



For more information or to schedule an orientation, visit stvcc.org or call 517-323-4734 ext. 1621.



Save the date for our **Guardian Society Fundraising Breakfast** on **October 8** – more details to follow.

If you're interested in a tour of our children's home, please contact the Development Team at donate@stvcc.org or call **517-323-4734 ext. 1201.**