



Notes From A Foster Mother

"How can you do foster care? Simply love them and then let them go back to their birth families? I could never do that!"

As a foster mom, I hear this all the time by well meaning people. Others seem to think we must be made of tougher material than the average parent. Well, it may surprise you that we are ordinary people just like you. Some of us have jobs outside the home. Most of us are married. Most of us have children of our own. But there are some single parent homes too. And like all people who have grown close to and loved another child, it is difficult to say goodbye. It is difficult for us to let go of someone who we have seen grow and change while they were living in our home.

When a social worker brings a new child into our home, there are some shaky times. Things are a little hectic as you adjust to this new arrival, and they adjust to you. It's important to be flexible, to slowly introduce the ways of your home. Before you know it, life has settled down into a comfortable routine and the awkwardness of the first few days are over. Then the child's worker calls and tells you when your foster child is going home. In between those times, there have been days of frustrations, days of joy, times of trouble, and times of great pride for the growth your foster child has taken. Love them? Oh, yes we do, with all our hearts. We have taken a stranger into our home and loved him/her as our own, always knowing that he/she belongs with the birth

parents. One must always remember that to them, no matter what the circumstances that surround their placement in your home, the birth parents love is a true and natural bond one should never try to break.

My children have the normal reactions any child would have if someone new entered their territory. They want to be friends and big sister and brother to the foster child. They have the same sibling rivalry that a normal family has. They complain once in a while that the "quantity" time isn't divided evenly. But when the foster child leaves, they are the first to say, *"When do we get another one?"*



Love them and let them go? Yes, it sounds hard, and it is. Any maybe it's not for everyone, but does it take a special kind of superhuman quality? I don't think so. Everyone, if they look deep enough will see that they too can find room to love another child for a little while. What are the rewards? The smiles, the hugs, seeing the growth in your own children as they share and care for someone who has less than them. But one of the biggest rewards for me is in knowing that it took so little of my time to reach out, love, care and make it better for a child – our greatest asset on earth.

So amongst the tears and the worries of letting go to an uncertain future, is love and strength in knowing that we have touched a life and made it better by just being here.



Become a **FOSTER PARENT**

Otter Tail County Human Services
530 Fir Avenue West
Fergus Falls, MN 56537



OTTER TAIL
COUNTY - MINNESOTA

BECOME A FOSTER PARENT!

Change lives – both the children's and your own



There are children in Otter Tail County that need foster parents -- and you may be able to help! Foster parents provide a temporary home for children who cannot stay with their families. When a child or sibling group is placed in your home, a journey begins that can last anywhere from overnight to several months. After the immediate safety of the child has been addressed, the next priority is reunifying the child with the family from which they were removed.

Foster parents are special people with a special job. They are people who can:

- › Find a place in their hearts and their homes for a child in need.
- › Accept the responsibility of caring for a child until they can be reunified with their families
- › Work as part of a team, with the child's best interests in mind.

Foster parents have these qualities:

- › Good listening skills
- › Flexibility
- › Realistic expectations
- › A sense of humor
- › A willingness to work with others



Who are the children needing foster care?

Children needing foster care come from diverse backgrounds and may have experienced abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Some have special needs. Some children need extra attention or specialized care. They are like other kids—learning, playing, and growing. These children are your neighbors, friends of your children, your students and members of your community who need love, stability, and a nurturing environment.



What are the responsibilities of foster parents?

- › Provide the basics: food, clothing, love and a safe home.
- › Encourage positive relationships between the child and his or her biological parent(s).
- › Arrange for medical and dental care, as needed.
- › Protect the child from harmful situations.
- › Discipline in a positive way, by setting rules that are consistent and appropriate.
- › Help the child to grow through educational, cultural, and social experiences.
- › Work as part of a team with social workers and biological parents.
- › Prepare the child to return home, live with relatives or adoptive parents, if a return home is not possible.



SCAN ME

For more information, scan the QR code or contact Otter Tail County Human Services.

218-998-8150