

VC Foster Care's "Homes with Heart" Appeals for Loving Homes

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Foster parents Shaun and Amanda Maxson

By Tim Pompey

The county agency Foster VC Kids is appealing to local families to consider becoming foster parents. As part of their outreach, they are holding a series of informational meetings on how to become a foster parent.

Currently, the county has more foster children than available caregivers. Elizabeth Thasiah, the manager for foster parent recruitment and retention within Ventura County's Children and Family Services Department, estimates they have about 200 active foster parents and 250 relative caregivers to look after a thousand foster children. Her hope is to recruit additional families who can make an extended commitment to work with foster children.

To this end, the county is scheduling a series of informational meetings at their human services office located at 855 Partridge Drive in Ventura. The meetings are scheduled for April 28, May 19, and June 30 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

For young families like Shaun and Amanda Maxson, helping foster kids is a special calling. They have been foster parents almost two years and in the process, adopted a little 18-month-old boy. He is now almost three years old.

Over the last two years, they have taken in children ranging from 11 months to eight years old. Their stays have varied from 10 days to almost a year. Shaun admits it's not easy, but he feels the challenge pays off. "A lot of kids are so broken when they come into our homes," he said, "but it's worth it. Obviously you come to love them."

According to Amanda, there's a special bond they develop with the children they take care of. "You have them every moment in your life for a month or six months, and then you feel that something's missing when they leave because you got so used to them being there," she stated.

They know however that their work makes an important difference in the lives of these children. "It's extremely rewarding because you see the effects of being able to take care of them and we've seen them get better," she said.

The Maxsons emphasize that there is much support available for foster parents, not only through the county, but also among fellow foster parents. "Beyond the county, there's this huge family of foster parents out there," said Shaun, "and they're so willing to help each other."

Foster care in this county takes many different forms, including the fostering and adoption of older teens and young adults. Such is the case with Erick Alvarez, a 21-year-old man who has been fostered by a local family and is currently in the process of being adopted. "I live with a family and they have taken me in and adopted me as their son, given me a room, and allowed me to take in their family activities," said Alvarez.

Why foster an older child? Alvarez, who spent previous time in foster care when he was younger, thinks the answer is simple: "I think the essential fact is that I have stability, permanence, security, love and hope."

Alvarez believes that having this parental support has been important in helping him grow into a mature young man. "They've played a significant role in helping me make decisions and consider my future," he said. "I've had opportunities in which having a mom and a dad gives you confidence, identity, purpose, and significance."

Rosalinda Vint has a different take on foster care. As the president and founder of "Women of Substance & Men of Honor" in Newbury Park, she handles high risk youth in desperate need of guidance and resources. Ranging in age from twelve to twenty-four, she described her kids as having serious problems, including incarcerations, abandonment, abuse and rejection. "They're emotional growth is stunted," she explained. "Their coping skills are stunted. Their reasoning skills are stunted because they've not been raised in a healthy environment, and they go into survival mode."

Nevertheless, she remains positive that with the right resources and care, these children can be helped. "We bring hope, healing, and training to address the mistakes that they've made, but to help the kids themselves understand that they are not mistakes."

She works closely with Foster VC Kids and believes that Ventura County's foster care services are some of the best in the state at working together collaboratively. "It's not one against the other," said Vint. "It's about bringing everyone

together, and that's what we have to do for the children in our care. They've not county children. They're our children."

Foster VC Kids director Thasiah hopes that people will come to their informational meetings and consider reaching out to foster children in desperate need of a home. "We hope people will stop for a moment and think about setting another place at the table for children who need encouragement in school, and when they're sad or afraid, need daily affection," she said. "Every child needs a home with a heart."

For more information about Foster VC Kids, visit their website at www.fostervckids.org or call them at [\(805\) 654-5594](tel:8056545594).

<http://tricontyentry.com/blog/vc-foster-cares-homes-with-heart-appeals-for-loving-homes/>

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Foster child and in process of being adopted, Erick Alvarez



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