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A WHOLE LOT OF LOVE JUST MIGHT BE THE ANSWER TO IMMEDIATE NEED FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Children's Hope Alliance Foster Parents help meet a tremendous need

Mecklenburg County, NC: May is National Foster Care Awareness month, and it's a time to recognize people who help foster kids in our community – those volunteer foster families who help provide children with a safe and loving home here in Mecklenburg County.

And there's quite a need for foster parents. After all, there are over 17,000 children in foster care in North Carolina – more than 800 in Mecklenburg County alone.

"There's always a need for foster parents," Children's Hope Alliance CEO Celeste Dominguez said. "And we are trying to fill that gap by preparing as many people who are willing."

And while the stressful effects of COVID-19 aren't yet reflected in the number of children in our state's foster care system, it is anticipated that a surge of children in need is imminent and this influx will put even more pressure on the agencies like Children's Hope Alliance (CHA) to provide homes for those in need, Dominguez explained.

An endless supply of love may be the only thing that will meet this seemingly inevitable demand.

CHA foster parents Colleen and her husband Kristopher are doing their part to meet this need. They have a tremendous capacity for love. After raising their 25 year-old daughter, 21 year-old son, 15 year-old son, they decided to expand their family in order to take kids out of the foster care system and provide them with a safe, stable, and loving home.

"I love kids. I think they're more important than ourselves," Colleen said. "Yes, it can be hard, but every child deserves to know they're loved."

Her current foster son, nine year-old Jordan, certainly knows he is loved. Jordan has special needs, which Colleen meets with grace each and every day.

On a daily basis, the Colleen and Kristopher juggle medical appointments, school needs and online learning for her 15 year-old son who is on the autism spectrum, as well as with teaching basic skills such as toileting and communication to help Jordan become more independent. Each day has its challenges, but it also has its bright spots.

"When you get over a hurdle and you see the "spark," all the work you pour in is worth it," Colleen said. "My favorite part of any day is when I look up at Jordan and he just smiles. You just meet his eyes and they just smile. The love you see there is incredible."

Do you want to find out more about how to become a foster parent? Contact [local RT name] at [phone] or visit www.childrenshopealliance.org to learn how to get involved.

About Children's Hope Alliance: Children's Hope Alliance works in communities across the state to fulfill our mission to provide hope, health, and healing for generations through comprehensive services and programs that provide safe homes, heal their hurt, and encourage a healthy start. CHA's foster care and adoption, residential, education, outpatient, and family programs touched nearly 2,000 children's lives last year. For more information, visit www.childrenshopealliance.org.

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