

Media Release

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Youthville Celebrates Foster Parents During National Foster Care Month

(Wichita, Kan., May 2010) – All children deserve a safe, happy life — including the nearly 500,000 American children and youth in foster care. May is National Foster Care Month, a time to focus attention on the year-round needs of youth in foster care. It is also an opportunity to celebrate the hundreds of foster parents that strive to make a difference.

On Saturday, May 15, Youthville will salute hundreds of its foster parents at a Foster Parent Appreciation event held at the Sedgwick County Zoo. The opening ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. in the educational auditorium. Shelley Duncan, Youthville President and CEO; Vice Mayor Jeff Longwell; and Karen Wahlmeier, SRS Program Administrator, Wichita Region will present.

“May is a time to say thank you to foster parents and the impact they make on the lives of the children they care for,” said Shelley Duncan, Youthville President and CEO. “I am humbled by Youthville foster parents. Not only do they make a commitment to care for youth that are not their own, but they dedicate themselves 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. Oftentimes, they have children of their own, are empty-nesters, and work full time.”

Foster Care Facts

- There are nearly half a million children in the United States that are in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential well-being.
- Each year, 26,000 young people in the United States age out of foster care, most without the appropriate resources, family connections, skills or options they will need to live healthy adult lives.
- There are an estimated 12 million foster care alumni in the U.S. representing all walks of life.
- There are approximately 950 foster care children from Sedgwick County.
- There are around 230 foster care children from Sedgwick County in Youthville foster homes.
- There are 490 youth in Kansas, which are cared for by Youthville's foster care program.
- The average length of a foster care stay in Kansas is about 12 months.
- There is a great need for 250 foster homes in the Wichita area to care for teens, sibling groups and special needs youth.
- Youthville has an information meeting every Thursday from 6 to 7 p.m. for people to learn about becoming foster parents. To register for the class, contact 316.529.9100, ext. 8118.

Youthville is one of the largest nonprofit, child welfare agencies in Kansas, specializing in foster care, adoption, Psychiatric Residential Treatment and Counseling and Therapy. The agency's 600 employees are passionate about its mission of **Giving Children Back Their Childhood** to the 1,400 Kansas children who suffer from abuse, neglect, abandonment, and trauma. To learn more visit www.youthville.org and visit www.youthvillestory.com to watch and read real stories.

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