

Winnisquam Echo

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SERVING TILTON, NORTHFIELD, BELMONT & SANBORNTON, N.H.

FREE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Spaulding Youth Center could be your gateway to becoming a foster parent

To the Editor:

Many people are familiar with Spaulding Youth Center (SYC) in Northfield, most commonly known as a residential treatment center for children. If that is your only reference point for Spaulding, I want to share a lesser known program they offer.

Spaulding Youth Center is a foster care licensing agency in New Hampshire. About seven years ago, our family decided we wanted to open our home to a child in need of a family. We began taking the required Foster & Adoptive Care Essential (FACES) classes to obtain our license. FACES classes are offered throughout the state and we found ourselves traveling to Manchester for the first one. We realized that for the second of the seven, three-hour required classes, we had a scheduling conflict and looked online for another location. In this search, we found that the class was being offered at Spaulding Youth Center. This was a great discovery because it was only minutes from our home. Little did we know that this would be much more than a convenience but likely the reason we continue to open our home today.

We finished the FACES requirements, along with background checks and fire inspection with the licensing specialist from Spaulding Youth Center and thus, they became the agency that holds our foster care provider license in New Hampshire. Being licensed through Spaulding means that we are able to have children in our home that may require a greater level of care due to emotional, behavioral, physical, cognitive or even family related needs. However, as with all licensing agencies in New Hampshire, Spaulding is aware of all children in New Hampshire that are in need of placement, despite the level of care he/she may need and we have had children with "lesser" needs in our home as well.

What I want to share with you today is a great appreciation for Spaulding Youth Center and their Individual Service Option (ISO) program for children in foster care.

In January of 2019, New Hampshire had about 1,200 children in foster, relative and congregate care. The number of children in care continues to rise. With numbers that high, it should not surprise you to learn that there is a GREAT need for foster parents in the state. Licensing agents, caseworkers and foster parents will tell you there are not enough beds available— not enough homes for these children. The role of a foster family varies. You can be a respite provider who helps provide care for children at times when they might need a "babysitter" or even when the child might benefit from some time with

other people. You could be an emergency placement family. A provider for when a child is taken into care and DCYF has no time to identify a more permanent placement. Emergency care is typically 14 days or less. There is also a need for a more traditional provider, where you open your home for a child in need for a longer period of time. The needs of these children range from weeks to even years. If you have a desire to open your heart and home, in any capacity, my guess is there is a need you can help with. I think it is important to remember the quote from AdoptUSkids.com, "You do not have to be perfect to be a perfect parent."

When you hold a license through Spaulding Youth Center, the child's ISO team always includes a clinician and a caseworker as well as a behind the scenes team of more than ten staff to help and support children and families. This team, supporting the child, is in addition to the DCYF case worker, therapist and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). The children who are in ISO care at SYC have a solid team! We are so appreciative of the support that they extend to their foster families—the support they have extended to us. Case workers for DCYF need to see children in the home one time per month. SYC sees children weekly (this is in addition to the support given by DCYF). This means the ISO team sees and hears the needs of their foster families and "their kids" on a weekly basis. The support they offer to assist with scheduling conflicts or even just to help out in a pickle is phenomenal. As with all parenting, the journey is one with highs and lows and requires a village. The emotional support the Spaulding team offers is significant and we remain grateful that years ago, we found that "local class." Publicly, we want to express our gratitude toward the ISO team at SYC! We thank you for all the support and appreciation you have shown to our family over the years and especially for all of the advocating that you do for the children you care for. We look forward to our continued relationship.

If you have ever considered opening your heart and home to a child in need of foster care and/or adoption, please know there is a need, and that there is a great local support right here in our very own community. Consider reaching out to Dawn Fontaine, Licensing Specialist, at Spaulding Youth Center (286-8901). The support you will get through the SYC ISO program can make all the difference in this journey.

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