

Stark County Job & Family Services

HUMAN SERVICES - CHILDREN SERVICES - CHILD SUPPORT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STARK JFS RECOGNIZES NOVEMBER AS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Canton, Ohio - Stark County Job and Family Services' Division of Children Services will recognize November as National Adoption Month by hosting a series of virtual events on Zoom, Facebook, and Instagram. Their mission is to bring awareness of the more than 125,000 children in the U.S. waiting to be adopted from foster care.

"Every child deserves a safe and secure place to call home", said Robert Myers, LISW-S, Deputy Director of the Division of Children Services. "Unfortunately, the pandemic has had a significant impact on many families in our community. There is currently a great need for both foster and adoptive parents. I encourage anyone who has ever considered opening their home to a child, to learn more about the process by contacting our office. We have some terrific kids here in Stark County who could use your help."

Stark County has 374 children living in foster care, including 75 sets of sibling groups. The average age of those in foster care is 8 years old. Currently, 92 children are in permanent custody and eligible for adoption.

The community is invited to learn more about these children by following the agency's social media pages at www.facebook.com/StarkFosterAdopt and www.instagram.com/StarkCountyFosterandAdopt. Throughout the month of November, children's profiles and adoption stories will be shared in weekly posts. Each post will include a photo, short biography, and information about how residents can become a foster care or adoptive parent.

The annual *Heart Gallery Stark County* will take place again this year. The project will present portraits of featured children hoping to find their forever family. Due to COVID-19, the portraits will not be displayed in-person. Instead, photographs and stories will be edited into a short video and shared on social media. The *Heart Gallery* will introduce eight children who are currently in permanent custody at Stark County Job and Family Services, including:

- Eric, a high school football player who would like to be a personal trainer one day
- Bill, a 13-year-old who enjoys riding bikes and playing video games
- Abby, a 12-year-old who plans to go to college to become a veterinarian
- Lance, a seventh grader who enjoys building things and performing science experiments
- Bernie, a musician at heart who would like to learn to play the trumpet
- Kayzie and Deziree, sisters who want a family to spend time with
- Myron, a sweet boy who is looking for a family to shower him with love

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The three-minute video will be posted on Facebook at www.facebook.com/starkfosteradopt and www.facebook.com/SCJFS, as well as on the Stark County Job and Family Services website at www.StarkJFS.org.

Residents who are interested in learning more about the adoption process are invited to participate in a special Adoption Information Night. The virtual event will be hosted by the Division of Children Services through Zoom on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. It will include a presentation by an adoption focused panel and provide an opportunity for the audience to ask questions. The event is free and open to the public. To register, please contact Jennifer Loomis at 330-451-8789 or jennifer.loomis@jfs.ohio.gov.

The process to become a foster care or adoptive parent requires training and certification through Stark County Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Most training sessions can be conveniently accessed and attended online after registration. To view a list of pre-service training classes, visit www.StarkJFS.org. Potential parents must be at least 21 years of age, provide proof of income to meet the needs of the household, and successfully pass required background checks. Both single adults and those in a couple are eligible.

For additional informational about foster care and adoption in Stark County, please visit www.StarkJFS.org or call 330-451-8789.

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