

Fostering with the Fosters



From left: Tim Foster, Cindy Foster, Kristin Magney

For eighteen years, Tim and Cindy Foster of Monticello, have provided adult foster care to numerous adults with mental health illness in their family home. Family adult foster care providers are a strong part of our communities that often get overlooked.

May is National Foster Care month and also Mental Health month. Awareness of both of these groups is needed now more than ever. According to the Community Adult Mental Health Initiative (CAMHI) website, “Mental illnesses are serious medical illnesses. They cannot be overcome through “will power” and are not related to a person’s “character” or intelligence.” The stigma around Mental Illness is rampant and has a real and negative impact on the ability for individuals to seek help.

Tim Foster grew up in his family home with a father that provided adult foster care (AFC). Growing up in this type of setting gave him a knowledge of AFC that many people do not have. So, when as a married man he came across a neighbor from down the street that needed a new home after his group home closed, Tim knew family AFC was an option. A phone call to the County by his wife Cindy led them to becoming licensed for AFC and able to provide a loving home to dozens of adults throughout the years.

When asked if the Fosters had anything to say to someone who is hesitant to care for individuals with mental health illness, Tim responded that “the majority of people with mental health issues just want to be seen as a person, a human being and to be treated with respect.” Most individuals, whom Tim and Cindy have worked with, have gained independence in learning new life skills. While some individuals stay in foster care lifelong, some build their skills enough to move out into an independent living situation.

The Fosters also held a child foster care license with Wright County for many years, which allowed them to also provide care to children. One of these children, Kristin, was later adopted by Tim and Cindy as an adult. Kristin credits Tim and Cindy with making a substantial impact on her life and without them she does not know where she would be today. But with their influence, Kristin has chosen to use her skills

gained living in this fostering environment and now works as a personal care assistant (PCA) for a local social service company.

Tim and Cindy agree that patience is an asset to anyone providing AFC. Many individuals receiving AFC services need repetitive reminders in order to master a skill. When the mastering of that skill happens, Tim says it is very rewarding!

While adult foster care is a rewarding path that many families take, it is not without challenges. Helping to build transportation independence can be difficult with a population that greatly relies on public transportation. Tim does think that Wright County's public transportation has improved greatly over the years, but continues to be a struggle. While foster providers are required to provide reasonable transportation for the individuals in their care, this is an area where individuals could find some independence.

The Fosters are now becoming grandparents to children of people that they have cared for. The care that they give is never-ending. As Cindy says, "We pretty much adopt everyone that comes through our door, like the name says, you're a Foster!"

The Four-County area (Wright, Sherburne, Stearns, and Benton) are in need of a larger pool of adult foster care providers to serve the mental health population. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a provider, please call Wright County Health & Human Services and speak with our adult foster care licensor at 763-682-7489 or visit our website at mnmentalhealth.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

Written by: Ellen Tschimperle, Wright County Adult Foster Care Licensor