

For Immediate Release

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Participant Interviews Available

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Foster Parents to be Recognized by Board of Supervisors *San Mateo County Children Need Local Foster Families*

Belmont, CA – On May 11, 2010, Mary Johnson, a Pacifica resident and foster parent since 1985, will represent foster parents throughout San Mateo County as the Board of Supervisors proclaims May National Foster Care month.

Ms. Johnson became a foster parent 25 years ago, when a friend of her teenage son asked if he could live with her because his foster mother had been diagnosed with cancer. As a parent, her heart immediately went out to him, but she hesitated because she already had three school-age children. The next day, she saw a television program about the needs of teens and in an instant, decided to take the boy in.

“Since that day, my heart has been filled with love for these children and we are truly, one family,” she said of the 50 San Mateo County foster children and youth she has raised, along with her three biological children and one adopted son.

In San Mateo County, 300 children and youth are in the foster care system. The number is down from 400 in 2008, but there still remains a need for more local foster parents like Mary Johnson who are willing to care for teenagers, newborns, sets of siblings and children with special needs.

“Children and youth need love and compassion to thrive,” said Pravin Patel, Human Services Agency manager, “but finding foster families for children with special circumstances can be a challenge.” Those children may be part of a sibling group, or may have language or cultural needs, disabilities, or may be older children. Half of all the children in the county’s foster care system are over the age of 10.

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“The most important thing in a child’s life is to grow up in a nurturing environment. with caring, stable adults, who will help them overcome extraordinary challenges,” said Deborah Torres, Children and Family Services Director, “San Mateo County urgently needs foster parents to keep children in local communities where they can maintain connections to their schools, friends, teachers and extended families”

San Mateo County has 50 licensed homes for foster care, 68 foster homes with intent to adopt and only 13 licensed foster homes that care for teenagers.

In May, there are additional activities to celebrate foster parents, the need for additional foster parents, and highlight the issue of foster care. These activities are:

- May 11: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors proclaim May Foster Care Month;
- HSA orientation session providing an overview of the foster care and adoptions programs:

Tuesday May 18, 2010
7:00-9:30 PM
1487 Huntington Avenue, South San Francisco

For more foster parent orientation info, contact Sharon Stone, San Mateo County Foster Parent Recruiter, 650-802-7651, sstone@smchsa.org.

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