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Helping ‘one child’ is theme of new DHSS PSA

TV spot urges public to become foster parents

ANCHORAGE — “One child”: That’s the title of a new public service announcement from the Department of Health and Social Services, Office of Children’s Services, encouraging Alaskans to consider becoming foster parents. All the “actors” in the piece are Alaska foster/adoptive parents or former foster youth who feel strongly about the impact a caring foster parent can have on a child. One youth in the public service announcement, Jesse, is currently in foster care and is searching for his “forever home” — an adoptive family.

Others in the PSA include Sen. Fred Dyson, a longtime foster parent, and Rep. Les Gara, a former foster youth who went on to Harvard Law School and the Alaska Legislature.

Also in the video are foster parent Laura Ingham, two-time Alaska high school basketball player of the year and college standout at Ohio State, and Amanda Metivier, a former foster youth turned foster parent and leader of Facing Foster Care in Alaska, who recently was given the national Casey Excellence for Children Award for her work with youth.

As of December 2012 in Alaska, 1,890 children were in out-of-home care. Some will need a foster home for a short time before returning to their families, others will need a more permanent home. In every case, the more homes that are available, the better the match can be between a child and a foster parent. This PSA encourages Alaskans to consider opening their “heart and home” to one child.

“Whenever we can do so safely, we strive to keep families intact while providing necessary services or supports. However, many times that is not possible and removal of the child from his or her home is necessary. In those circumstances the right foster parent can significantly reduce the trauma that removal creates and provide the child with security and kindness,” said Children’s Services Director Christy Lawton, who also appears in the PSA.

“We encourage anyone who’s interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent to call our information number today,” Lawton said. “We need families of all shapes, sizes and backgrounds, who are willing to make the difference for what may be just a few days or a lifetime.”

Other Alaskans appearing in the video are: Elizabeth Cantu, foster youth; Yaari Kingeekuk, adoptive parent; Michael Schwieter, former foster youth; Rebecca Shier, former foster youth; Mechele Adams, foster parent; Victoria Green, foster parent; and Cord Adams, former foster youth.

Funding to place the PSA on TV stations around the state was allocated by the 2012 Alaska Legislature. Alaska Broadcasters Association will distribute the video throughout the state to 20 different television stations. The video can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/54545267>. Call 1-800-478-7307 today to learn more about becoming a foster parent.

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The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services promotes and protects the health and well-being of Alaskans. We help individuals and families create safe and healthy communities. For more information, visit <http://hss.alaska.gov/>.