

Woman Provides Safe Haven for Over 50 Children



“Bring her to us.”

With just those words, foster mother Bonna Williamson started her lifelong commitment to fostering. Ten years ago, Williamson was approached by a social worker who came to her with a heart-rending story of a premature newborn baby girl, Myah, in need of a temporary place to call home.

“Bring her to us,” Williamson told the social worker – and within months, she and her family underwent a mission to help children in need, a mission that has led her to foster over 50 children over a ten year span.

“Our family just stepped up and did what I believe anyone should do,” Williamson said. “It’s impossible to say ‘no’ when that call comes to you (from a social worker) and you know there is a child in need on the other end of the line.”

Williamson has fostered infants to teenagers, some for merely hours and some for years. She attributes her lengthy and successful role as a foster mother to what she considers a somewhat unconventional approach to fostering.

“I guess tough love is what my family has had to show,” Williamson said. She further explains, “many foster parents think that showering kids who may not have had ‘enough’ with plenty of premature “I love you’s” and material things will make them feel loved, and that’s not necessarily true.”

Curfews and groundings, earning ‘privileges’, knowing how to say no -- as someone who considers herself more stringent than other foster parents, Williamson admits that the most rewarding part of fostering is having children later recognize her dedication to them.

“Sitting in as a ‘mom’ at the graduation of a teen who probably wouldn’t have graduated otherwise, dressing them up for prom – rewarding moments as a foster parents are sometimes not felt until later,” Williamson said. “The letter you get in the mail several years after they leave that says, ‘thanks, I didn’t realize what you were trying to do at the time,’ is worth it.”

While Williamson has fostered over 50 children, she has only adopted one; Myah. Some families struggle with the idea of providing only temporary support to children in foster care, but she explains, “We have to look at our homes as stepping stones in the life of a child sometimes. Our home might not be the ultimate placement for one reason or another but we can still play a part for that 'season' in their lives. That need for that child to move on does not mean failure on the part of the foster parents.”

While Williamson made what she calls “a very difficult, but necessary” decision to resign as a foster parent, last year, she wholeheartedly encourages those interested in the fostering process, even those with reservations, to reach out to their local DSS to learn more about how they can get involved.

“We have always presented our home as a “safe haven” for the children here,” Williamson said. “I put myself into every child, and while it takes a toll on you – it’s the toughest job you’ll ever love.”