

Foster Goodness campaign hopes to enlarge network of foster families

The Department of Human Services has launched a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the need for foster parents for teenagers. The effort supports CYF's goal to reduce reliance on group, residential and institutional placements for children and youth, in recognition of research and experience showing that children and youth have better outcomes when their placements are with loving, supportive families.

Blender Inc. of Shadyside was selected through a competitive bidding process to assist with the campaign, working with the Office of Community Relations (OCR) and the office of Children, Youth and Families, using funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Called "Foster Goodness," the image-strong awareness and recruitment campaign features the message that foster parents are needed for teenagers in Allegheny County. The campaign also incorporates grassroots outreach, specifically targeting McKeesport, Penn Hills and Wilkinsburg because DHS has identified those municipalities as having the greatest need for foster parents.

The ads are running in print publications; on WISH 99.7 and its webpage; on KDKA-TV; billboards; Port Authority buses running from the East garage and more. The WISH spots will air on the "Delilah After Dark" radio program. The popular disc jockey, who has adopted children, is a proponent of foster care and founded the Point Hope program to advocate for children in foster care.



The campaign promotes the Director's Action Line (DAL) phone number (1-800-862-6783) and FosterGoodness.org as contacts for more information about fostering. DAL specialists are sending information about local foster care agencies to inquirers and tracking calls while fostergoodness.org redirects prospective caregivers to the DHS foster care pages on the Allegheny County website. There they can view videos created by OCR staff that testify to the value of foster care for parents and teens alike; learn more about agencies and the Foster Parent Advisory Board; and find answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

The ads in print, on social media and on websites also have messages tailored for specific audiences. For example, an ad that ran recently in Metroburgh magazine, whose audience is the LGBTQ community in Pittsburgh, says, "I came out and got kicked out."

"Right now there's an LGBT teen who could use support, guidance and affirmation. Do you have room in your heart and home?" the ad continues.

The Foster Goodness campaign is a portion of the larger DHS effort under a five-year, \$1.5 million [Diligent Recruitment grant](#) awarded to the county beginning in September, 2013. DHS has been working on many fronts to strengthen the Children, Youth and Families (CYF) system's recruitment, selection, training and support of families who are willing to provide foster care in a safe and loving home for youth ages 12 and up. Work has included creating a Youth Speakers Bureau; launching a Foster Parent Advisory Board; making peer supports available to families who are fostering teens; the creation of a specialized Teen Family Foster Care program; implanting training and coaching for CYF staff; and developing consistent training standards and more training opportunities for foster parents.