

# The Bandera PROPHE'T

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Help foster children in Bandera County “Stay Local”

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Special to the Prophet

Each year children in Bandera county are removed from their homes because of parental neglect or abuse. These innocent children are removed by CPS, Children’s Protective Service, and placed in foster homes to temporarily care for them with the intention of helping to reunify a child with their biological family after the issues which caused the child to be placed into foster care are resolved.

Children removed into foster care lose everything they know at once, especially when they are placed far away from their home county. It is a loss of home, parents, extended family, as well as community, school and friends. If the children must be removed from their home, it would minimize their trauma to be placed in a caring foster family nearby. The children may continue to live in familiar surroundings and be a part of their home community while their parents work on healing and gaining safe parenting skills in anticipation of the children’s return home.

In Bandera County, there are very few licensed foster care homes, so foster children must be sent to other counties, sometimes far away from their homes.

Currently there are 33 children in foster care from Bandera county under the age of 18. Only four of those children are placed in foster care in Bandera county. The remaining 29 children are living in nearby counties, and as far away as Harris County, near Houston – over four hours away from home.

In general, a child is placed in a foster home for only a year. It is not necessary to own one’s own home, be married or be rich to be a

foster parent. It is necessary to be able to provide a child with a safe, nurturing, stable environment. Basic requirements include being at least 21 years of age, passing a criminal background check and home study, being financially stable, applying for a foster license and attending pre-service training on caring for children in CPS custody.

Since 2018, 21 children have exited CPS custody from Bandera county: 12 were reunited with their biological parents, seven went to live with other relatives permanently, one was adopted by a non-relative and one aged out. That's over 90 percent that went home with parents or relatives.

Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent need to contact DFPS, Department of Family and Protective Services, at 210-333-2004 or any private foster agency, such as Divinity Family Services at 830-890-5838 or Pathways Youth and Family Services at 830-515-4343 to obtain a foster license. The biggest reward for a foster parent is the positive impact they can have on the future of a child's life.