

## ❖ FOSTER PARENTING

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the years. She's become more aware of how many children in the community need help. She's become conscious of basic needs that you and I take for granted, a hot meal or clean, pressed clothes, and how these things can make a world of difference to a child. The gratitude from the children for her opening up her heart and home to them fills her heart with more compassion. Quite honestly, I don't know how such a great big heart can fit into her little body.

This vivacious little lady shows no signs of slowing down. Along with raising a grandson and continuing to take in foster children, BJ also helps with the Respite Program. This program allows her to take care of children in another foster parent's care if that foster parent needs to be away, is ill, or just needs to have a break. Think of it as a "babysitter" other foster parents can turn to. She also volunteers her time three days a week to assist with a food bank at the First Assembly of God Church in Yankton. When she has time, she manages to work on her quilting hobby.

I asked BJ if she has any advice for anyone considering becoming a foster parent. She feels that it's important to have an open mind and a big heart. A foster parent often can't predict a specific outcome to occur, so being flexible and adaptable is a vital attribute to have. Her foster parenting experience has been extremely rewarding, evident by the beam on her face as I talked with her about the children she has encountered.

According to the South Dakota Department of Social Services, 608 children are in foster care in South Dakota, with 17 children in foster care in the Yankton area. In South Dakota, 689 families are licensed to provide foster care. In the Yankton area, 27 families are

licensed to provide foster care and nine families are available to take placements. If interested in information about becoming a foster parent, please visit with your local Department of Social Services office or go to [www.fosteronesd.org](http://www.fosteronesd.org).

❖ *By Julie Eickhoff*



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