

Colo. Christians Answering the Prayers of Orphans

Each year thousands of children enter America's foster care system and state workers are often overwhelmed with the task of finding them a safe home, but a growing number of Christians are getting involved to help ease the burden.

If you ever take the time to hear them, all of these children long for a sense of normalcy and peace—a place to call home.

"Will I ever be enough to be loved?" asks one 5-year-old foster girl.

After being placed with a permanent family, one 12-year-old boy commented, "I have a dream."

"This time someone wanted me and I didn't have to say goodbye," he said.

In James 1:27, the Bible speaks of children without parents and the answer to their needs:

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress."

Faith Community Responds

In Colorado, the faith community is answering the call to care by connecting children in the state's foster care system with interested families in the local church.

Sharen Ford oversees adoption and foster care services for Colorado's Department of Human Services.

"We try to reach out to their relatives," Ford told CBN News. "Sometimes relatives aren't equipped to provide that safety net for their loved ones and so we bring them into foster care," she explained.

In 2004, that included nearly 900 children and teenagers, a number the partnership between the government and local churches reduced dramatically.

“All across Colorado we have pastors and lay leaders and other faith leaders going out and sharing our message for us and saying can you make room in your heart and in your home for the kids that are in Colorado that need to be in a place that’s safe,” Ford said.

Project

Pastor Robert Gelinas of Denver’s Colorado Community Church wanted to give children in foster care a better life.

“Children in foster care have had the one thing they should be able to count on fall apart, and that is their family,” he said.

In 2007 Gelinas started Project , a faith-based organization that encourages Christian parents to adopt.

“When you look at the sheer number of followers of Jesus, the number of congregations out there, it is very possible for a family to be waiting for every single child out there in foster care, ” Gelinas said, “but right now what we have is children waiting for families.”

Project started out recruiting families to adopt its focus also includes finding church families to foster kids temporarily or long term.

Project president Shelly Radic says the response has been overwhelming as families across Colorado step up to help.

“We have over 400 families from churches in Colorado that are engaged at some point in the process,” Radic told CBN News.

Eight Kids Plus One

Kevin and Janell Lusk had eight kids of their own when they were asked to participate in the program.

"We were challenged by Project to consider obeying the Word that says true religion is to minister to widows and orphans in their need," Kevin Lusk said.

The Lusks wondered what that would be like as they counted the cost to take in more kids.

"They need those little pieces they have not gotten," his wife, Janell, said. "So part of that is that unconditional acceptance and love and playfulness and life giving that a family can give, not always perfectly believe me. But we can give a taste, a piece of how God has designed it to be."

After the Brannan family of Colorado Springs opened their hearts and home to foster care, they drive a school bus to accomodate all the kids.

"Right now we have eight children," Kimberly Brannan said. "We have four biological, homegrown; two handpicked who are foster/adopt; and then, right now, we have two foster children."

The Brannan's biological son Zach said he is enjoying having new siblings in the house from time to time. "I love them with all my heart."

"We have great times together. It just feels great," her husband, Zack, said.

"Faultless"

Jonathan Goode of the group "Unthinkable" used his film, *Faultless*, to urge the Body of Christ to get more involved in orphan care.

The film highlights the challenge of finding homes for older kids who are often overlooked because most families prefer younger children.

Goode said some 30,000 kids age out of foster care every year.

"Some of us have got to start saying we will care for you no matter how hard it is because we think Christ is worth it, and we think you are worth it," Goode said.

No one would argue that fostering these kids is worthwhile, but many admit it's not always easy.

For that reason, says Pastor Gelinas, the church is the solution to the problem. "Churches are used to dealing with crisis," he said.

"Families deal with whatever they are facing," Gelinas continued. "And while adoption and foster care does have its unique challenges. ... there's a readymade care structure."

"And so Project is seeking to bring the whole church to a child, not just a family, but then there's a whole church around that family," Gelinas said.

Janell said no matter how long the children are in their home, they use that time to minister to them.

"I really felt like God said this is a 'for such a time as this ministry,' she said.

"For such a time as these children come into your home, your pour into them and it doesn't stop there," she added. "The Lord is going to take care of them, and the Lord is going to see to their needs."