

More than one Way to Be a Hero COMMUNITY COMMENT : Mike Goldsby, June 16, 2016

Why is the world so messed up sometimes? We all have our favorite reasons. You might blame everything on immigrants, or contrails or climate change or the federal deficit, gun control or the lack of gun control.

I think many of our world's problems, and nation's problems, and even our local problems, can be traced back to neglecting our young. Trauma and neglect in the early years set up problems later in life. Anything that can protect our young avoids problems later in life.

Multiple studies have looked at the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences. The initial research was conducted by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control. Patients were recruited to the study in the mid-90s and have been in long-term follow up for health outcomes. This and subsequent studies have proven a link between Adverse Childhood Experiences and subsequent health and behavioral problems, mental illness, substance abuse, obesity and, sadly, future abuse and neglect.

Adverse Childhood experiences include

- **Physical abuse, Sexual abuse and Emotional abuse**
- **Physical neglect and Emotional neglect**
- **Mother treated violently**
- **Household substance abuse and Household mental illness**
- **Parental separation or divorce**
- **Incarcerated household member**

So what can be done about this? An immediate and local solution lies in strengthening our Foster Care system. When children are abandoned or need to be removed for their own safety, a good foster care family can make all of the difference in the world, for that child now and for all of us as they mature.

Dale Maples, the plumbing professional guy, is a strong local advocate for Foster Care. He is a part of The Forgotten Initiative, a nationwide faith-based effort to increase awareness of foster care and adoption.

They have a store front on H Street in Eureka, directly across from the old Post Office. Their group can accept donations to assist local foster youth and foster families. And, Dale is glad to talk with anyone about the joys and challenges and realities of becoming a foster family. He and his wife Jill have fostered and ultimately adopted three children, adding to their family.

The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services recruits and assists Foster families. There are currently 335 Foster children in Humboldt County, with 186 Foster homes and 32 prospective homes. Some homes take more than one child. But you can see we need more foster homes.

“There is more than 1 way to be a hero:” That is the DHHS community education campaign designed to recruit more families. You will see their ads.

Foster parents are people who genuinely care about the well-being of children and their families. They are people who are married, single, retired, working, students, or have children (or not) who provide needed stability for youth in foster care. Foster parents understand that children will thrive in a home where they are cared for unconditionally.

Foster children receive a monthly stipend, paid to the foster parents. Medical and dental costs are covered and social workers are available to assist as well.

You can learn more by calling 499-3410 or going online to humboldt.gov/foster

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment.