

Foster

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The children enjoy camping out in the family's tent, playing with one another and petting Fluffy, the family cat, Charlotte said.

They also learn responsibility, picking up their toys, putting their laundry in the basket and making their own beds.

"We have been blessed," David said. "These little ones are great. I don't know why people think that they have to go to foreign countries to adopt a child when we have such beautiful kids who need homes right here. Even if they stay with us only a short time, we know that we've done something positive to change their lives."

"For the amount of time that God lets them stay with us, we'll give them the best life that we can," Charlotte said. "And we'll continue to stay in touch after they return to their families."

Wanting their son, A.J., to have other children at home, Franklin Township residents Marleen and Alan Shaver became a foster family five years ago.

Of the 11 little ones who have lived with them, they have adopted a boy, Stephen, nine, and a girl, Samantha, six going on seven.

"I like having other kids around," Stephen said. "Once I had to share my room, but it was okay."

He enjoys playing on the swings and sitting on the tractor with his foster sibling, a toddler who Samantha likes to sing to.

Playing on the swings which A.J. assembled, joining in a family game of kickball and building roads for toy cars in the sandbox are also high on her list of fun things to do.

"I shared my room with 11 kids," Samantha said. "Not all at once. The crib is in there. Sometimes they would wake me up crying and I would tell them to go back to sleep. Sometimes I sleep through it."

A.J., 14, said that he was excited when he learned that he would have foster brothers and sisters.

"It's nice to have other kids around," he said. "We play outside a lot and ride the quad and the snowmobile."

Finishing eighth grade at Baptist Academy in Clarks Summit, A.J. plays baseball, football and soccer at school.

At home he plays Nintendo. "Sometimes the little kids teach me a lot about that," he smiled.

Marleen said that Samantha once told her, "I like the foster kids. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here."

"The rewards are greater than any hardships," Alan said. "People dwell too much on the negative aspects of foster parenting and don't think about how beautiful these children are."

"You can't keep them all," Marleen said. "They have to go

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Alan Shaver
Foster father of 11

back - we want to help restore their families."

The Shavers said they often become friendly with the children's birth parents, who are encouraged to visit.

They make up an album filled with photos and memories of Mommy Marleen and Daddy Alan for each child to take back to their birth families and encourage them to stay in touch after they return.

One little one still has her photo album and a Bible with pictures which she often looks at.

"No time spent with these children is wasted," Alan said. "You're

giving them a short piece of your life. They might have never had this kind of love before."

Marleen said that one birth parent told her, "You have shown me a piece of my child that I didn't know was there."

"If you have ever considered being a foster parent, try it," Alan said. "If you don't, you might miss the best experience of your life."

In order to protect their legal right to confidentiality, none of the foster children living with the families in this article have been identified.



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE
FOSTER PARENTS - Shavertown residents David and Charlotte Rogers have shared their home with two foster children.

What it takes to be foster parents

Becoming a foster parent or family isn't as complicated as it sounds. David and Charlotte Rogers said that the main requirement is love. "You can be a single parent, married, have children or not," Charlotte said. "It doesn't matter."

Prospective foster parents must learn how to deal with the child's birth parents, their rights, the children's and parents' rights and how to contact their support worker or the children's caseworker.

Each couple or parent is assigned a support worker to help them deal with unforeseen situations. They may select the age and gender of the little ones who will live with them.

Both the Rogers and Shaver families opted for children younger than their own, so that the older ones could be role models for the younger ones.

Other foster parenting requirements include:

- Passing a criminal records check.
- Having a job.
- Keeping a fire extinguisher and smoke alarm in the home.
- Having a bed in a bedroom for each child. (Children may share a bedroom, but may not sleep in a hallway, for example.)

The state will provide foster families with:

- Ongoing training and a parents' support group.
- Medical insurance for each foster child and access to WIC, a federal program to provide children under five years of age with dairy products and juice.
- Assistance with the child's expenses, except for day care reimbursement for working mothers.

"You don't need a big, fancy house," Charlotte Rogers said. "All that you need is a room with a bed and a lot of love."

Bugs

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cankerworm, but don't seem to like the taste of the two species of tent caterpillars, Bast said.

"We won't know the extent of caterpillar damage for at least two weeks," Bast said. "After we do aerial surveys of defoliation, we'll have to positively identify what has been eating the trees."

The recent wet spring weather has only added to the caterpillar problem because three alternating warm and cold spells stopped the caterpillar eggs from hatching three times, Bast said.

Consequently, the caterpillars are in three different stages of development, making spraying difficult, if not impossible.

Homeowners' only recourse is to wait for next spring, when the pesky little crawlers are expected to hatch around the first week in May, depending on weather conditions, Bast said.

Water

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cars and watering lawns, as a precautionary measure while repairs were made.

The conservation request was discontinued early June 1 after crews finished repairing the broken electrical cable at the College Manor well.

The water system was back to normal late Friday afternoon after crews repaired the burned-out motor in the first well.

"Having our two largest wells out at the same time was a fluke," Coyle said. "The motor which burned out was only a year old. Our preventive maintenance program is designed to prevent this type of situation from happening."

Coast Guard safe boating day June 12

The Northeast Regional Highway Safety Program, in an effort to increase public awareness in regards to the dangers of drinking alcohol and operating a motor vehicle both on land and water, will conduct its 4th annual Safe Boating DUI/BUI Awareness Day at the Harveys Lake Public Boat Launch, June 12 from 12 to 4 p.m. Raindate, Saturday, June 25, 12-4.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary will conduct courtesy boat inspections. Free mocktails (non-alcoholic cocktails). Information booths will be provided.

There will be a free raffle, giveaway items for the kids and free munchies.

Rescue vehicles will be on display and the public will be invited to drive through a mock sobriety checkpoint.

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