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**Five Colorado Families Recognized in Celebration of
National Foster Care Month**

More foster families needed in every community across Colorado

DENVER (May 8, 2023) – To mark National Foster Care Month and encourage more Coloradans to become foster parents, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) recognized five foster families during a luncheon at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science on Saturday, May 6.

“These families are examples of ordinary Coloradans doing something extraordinary to strengthen families and their community. Their support for reunification and commitment to caring for youth of all ages is remarkable,” said Minna Castillo Cohen, director of the CDHS Office of Children, Youth and Families. **“They are an inspiration for others to consider what they can do right now to make a difference for kids and families.”**

When parents need additional support to provide safety and care for their children, county human/social service agencies work to meet those needs while keeping families together. If that is not possible, caseworkers first look for kin – adults who have an established, trusted relationship with the child – to step in. If no kin is available, a foster family is there to provide safety, stability and care. Today in Colorado, there are 3,637 children and youth living with Colorado’s 2,147 certified kinship and foster families.

“We know that people are curious about foster care and want to know more about what it is really like,” said Castillo Cohen. **“By sharing these real stories, we hope to inspire more Coloradans to support children and youth who need a temporary safe place to heal while their parents or caregivers work on building skills to help their children thrive.”**

Every community in Colorado needs more foster families as the state continues to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First). Family First is a federal law that, among several other provisions, seeks to ensure children and youth who cannot live safely at home are living in a kinship or foster family home rather than in a residential care setting, and emphasizes reunification with biological family members whenever possible. Many of the families recognized by CDHS this year care for older youth and youth with higher needs who might otherwise live in a residential care setting, such as a group home or residential child care facility, and excel at supporting reunification with biological family members.



Being a foster parent, while challenging, can be extremely rewarding. In Colorado foster parents can be:

- Single, married, or in a committed relationship
- All races and ethnicities
- All sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions
- Homeowners or renters
- An experienced parent or a first-time parent
- Older or young (minimum 21 years old)

To learn more about becoming a foster parent, visit CO4Kids.org.

The five families being recognized by the State of Colorado for National Foster Care Month are:

Matthew and Yvette Berrelez from Greeley

After Yvette served as a Court Appointed Advocate (CASA), she and Matthew decided they were ready to do even more to help kids in Colorado and became certified foster parents in Weld County. Over the last five years, Matthew and Yvette have fostered 15 children alongside their three biological children. Recently, they became one of the first therapeutic foster homes in Weld County. They build strong relationships with the young people in their homes and are a consistent presence even when they have more challenging behaviors. Matthew and Yvette also work closely with the biological families of the children and youth in their care and support their relationships so they can return home with less disruption.

Cora and Stan Krol from Pueblo

Cora and Stan became foster parents with Pueblo County in 1989 and have cared for children and youth in foster care for 34 years. Currently, they care for boys, including those with special needs on the autism spectrum. Cora and Stan emphasize education for the youth in their homes and work with them to help them reach their potential. They have made lasting connections with the young people who have lived in their home as well as their families. They have hosted young people and their families for holidays and have even held a wedding in their backyard. Recently, their adult daughter and granddaughter began providing foster care in Pueblo County as well.

Beth and Rich Scutellaro from Colorado Springs

When Beth and Rich became foster parents three years ago, they began by taking children younger than their own biological children and providing respite to children and youth of all ages. After providing respite to a 16-year-old named Destinie two years ago, they invited her to live with them. Beth and Rich used their trauma informed parenting style to create a strong relationship with Destinie and helped her set goals for her future. With support from Beth, Rich and their community, Destinie, now 18, is thriving and has graduated from high school early, obtained her driver's license, has a job and is making long-term career plans.



COLORADO

Office of Children,
Youth & Families

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Gail Trembly from Centennial

Gail Trembly has been a foster parent for over 35 years. She currently works with young men in foster care who are transitioning to adulthood and has maintained lasting connection with many of the 190 youth who have been in her home long after they have left. Gail has been a soccer coach and as well as a parent and foster parent in her community for many years. She asks for support from others and creates partnerships in her community to connect the youth she cares for with mentors and employment opportunities. Gail also uses equine therapy to support the youth in her home and helped to start Zuma's Rescue Ranch which offers companion-based animal therapy in the Littleton community.

Mariya and Richard Vigil from Arvada

Since becoming foster parents over nine years ago, Mariya and Richard have cared for more than 20 young children in foster care and have adopted one child, Thomas John, now 6 and will soon be adopting another, Amelia, now 19 months old. Mariya and Richard foster as a family alongside their two biological teenage daughters, Dalayna and Tessa, who support them in caring for the young children in their home, many of whom have high medical needs. Many of the children who have been in their home return to visit and have accompanied them on a family trip to Disney World. The family has provided lasting support to the biological family members of many of the children they have cared for after reunification providing guidance and child care as well as purchasing Christmas gifts and furnishing an apartment.

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