



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
**Parks & Community Services**  
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[www.kirklandwa.gov](http://www.kirklandwa.gov)

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Lynn Zwaagstra, Director  
Leslie R Miller, Human Services Supervisor

**Date:** May 10, 2021

**Subject:** NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH PROCLAMATION

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Mayor proclaim May 2021 as National Foster Care Month.

### **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

National Foster Care Month is a time to acknowledge families and professionals who help children and youth in foster care. This year the Children's Bureau recognizes National Foster Care Month through the initiative and its theme "Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents," as part of an on-going effort to promote meaningful family engagement, support, and empowerment.

There is a critical shortage of licensed foster homes and group homes in the State of Washington. In Fiscal Year 2020 children and youth spent 1,863 nights in hotel rooms with their social worker because of this shortage. This number has been increasing significantly over the last few years. National Foster Care Month is a time to share our gratitude for those who support youth and families by being a resource to children in need and supporting birth parents so that they may safely reunite with their families whenever possible. It takes collaboration and community effort to support children, birth parents, and resource and kin families during challenging times. There are several local organizations that support foster care youth and need community support.

Friends of Youth recruits and supports families who can offer therapeutic foster homes. In addition, they operate several agency homes for youth with special needs. More information about Friends of Youth work with foster families can be found at <http://friendsofyouth.org/FosterCare.aspx>.

Treehouse is the State's leading nonprofit organization addressing the academic and other essential support needs of the thousands of youth in foster care. Treehouse is committed to youth in care statewide achieving a degree or other career credential, living wage job and stable housing.

Treehouse provides:

- Access to clothes, toys and school supplies
- Weekly academic support for youth in high school
- Funding to be able to participate in important childhood experiences like summer camps, sports, and other extracurricular activities
- Funding for Driver's Assistance programs to help youth get their driver's license
- Access to a Launch Success Coach to guide youth in their transition from high school to adulthood.

More information about Treehouse and the ways the community can support children and youth in foster care is available at [Treehouse - Nonprofit Serving Youth in Foster Care \(treehouseforkids.org\)](https://treehouseforkids.org)

The Mockingbird Society is an advocacy organization founded in 2000 to provide meaningful opportunities for youth across Washington state to participate in the social justice effort to improve the foster care system. The organization is dedicated to improving the outcomes for both foster kids and foster parents. Recognizing a clear link between experience in the child welfare system and homelessness, Mockingbird began addressing issues around youth homelessness in 2013. More information about supporting and empowering youth is available at <https://www.mockingbirdsociety.org/>

Community members interested in becoming a foster parent may learn more at the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families website [Become a Foster Parent | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)

Remember that there are many ways to support children and youth who have entered the foster care system.

- Become a foster family
- Provide respite care for a foster family
- Volunteer or donate to an organization supporting youth and children in the foster care system
- Become educated regarding the challenges of children and youth in the foster care system and advocate for reforms that will better support them

The Friends of Youth CEO Paul Lwali will be in attendance to accept the proclamation.

**Attachment**      National Foster Care Month Proclamation



## A PROCLAMATION OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND

### Proclaiming May as National Foster Care Month in Kirkland, Washington

**WHEREAS**, the U. S. Children’s Bureau has declared the 2021 theme of National Foster Care Month to be *Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents*;

**WHEREAS**, when a child’s home environment is unsafe due to abuse, neglect or other circumstances, foster care provides a temporary home for the child with foster parents, relatives, or in some cases, therapeutic residential care; and

**WHEREAS**, strengthening families and focusing on their wellbeing is vital to building strong communities, and preserving families is the primary goal of the child welfare system; and

**WHEREAS**, there are over 400,000 youth in foster care across the nation, including approximately 10,000 in the state of Washington and several dozen in Kirkland; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the lack of foster families, children and youth had to spend almost 2,000 nights in motel rooms with their case managers in this state in just the last year; and

**WHEREAS**, during National Foster Care Month we recognize that structural racism in the child welfare system has resulted in a disproportionate number of African American and Indigenous children and youth have been taken from their families of origin; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately one in three youth who age out of foster care become homeless within one year; and

**WHEREAS**, foster parents play an important role in supporting biological parents and helping them enhance their relationship with their children to achieve family stability and maintain family connections in support of family reunification; and

**WHEREAS**, those of us unable to provide a foster home are able to support children and youth in foster care by offering respite care to foster families, supporting biological parents working to reunite with their children, advocating for strong public policy or volunteering to spend time with the children and youth in care; and

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Penny Sweet, Mayor of Kirkland, do hereby proclaim on behalf of all residents of Kirkland, WA, May 2021 to be National Foster Care Month and urge all residents to volunteer their time and talents on behalf of children in foster care.

Signed this 18<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2021

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Penny Sweet, Mayor