

EARLY BIRD WEEKLY



NewbergRotaryEarlybirds.org

November 19, 2020

This year's annual Christmas Auction will be virtual and will run from Dec 1-10.

The deadline to submit items for bid is Nov 25 (to Shelley or Raquel).

Last week was Shirley Turner presenting Reach Northwest.



Shirley had a long career in the tech sector including 24 years with Intel in a sales and marketing executive role.

In 2005 she agreed to start Royal Family Kid Camp in Newberg, a summer program designed specifically for neglected and abused kids age seven to eleven. That experience ignited a passion for helping at-risk kids that prompted retirement from Intel in 2008 and the start this new chapter of her life.

She has since found new ways to support these vulnerable children and their families.

Today she is founder and executive director of Reach Northwest based in Newberg providing programs, resources and support for children and families in the Welfare system of Polk and Yamhill Counties.

She leads with, "I want to paint a picture for you." After 16 years of seeing kids' apps coming in to camp, and dealing specifically with kids of trauma, we gather information that gives us a little context of the child.

One application sticks in her memory from a nine year old boy that had been placed in nine different foster homes...in the last twelve months.

That is not unusual for children in the foster care system. Is there any reason this child would NOT act out, melt down, shut down when, between each foster home, he's trying to reconnect with his own mother.

Now, picture you're the foster parent. You are bringing in this cute little blonde haired blue eyed boy with a ton of emotional baggage. There's this misnomer that if you give love, support, a roof over their heads and food on the table ... that all their troubles go magically away.

What it actually does is confuses them and behaviors ramp up. And the foster parents, if they don't get the training they need, they end up pleading with DHS that they can't handle it and the child needs to move. That happens a lot.

Now, let's talk about DHS for a moment and how they are overburdened and under

funded. In 2019 there were 162 children in foster care at least one day a year. There are 88 foster homes. Of those 88, a third are for "general placement." The other TWO thirds are for "specific placement," meaning "I wanna take my granddaughter," or "I want to help my best friend that just got put in Coffee Creek

and I will take her daughter." "I only want babies 0-6 months," and other such specific restrictions.

When DHS calls a foster parent, that person can say no. They only have about four hours to make a decision.

Now, with COVID in the mix, it's even harder to place so many families have multiple foster kids.

One in particular has two of their own plus five foster kids. And all of them are autistic and/or deaf. When she went to deliver goods to this parent (Air Force vet) who was just calm as a cucumber amid the mayhem of noise and curious, repetitive questions.

What REACH Northwest is attempting to do is make sure that every child, parent and foster parent feels heard and supported. And that they know there is hope for the future of themselves and the kids they're fostering.

REACH NW mobilizes the community to serve and empower foster parents.

They provide support for children in foster care and help in foster parent recruitment and retention. Families of Origin Preservation is simply DHS' end goal of reunifying children with their families (or kinship, guardianship, adoption, or age-out) as soon as it is safe to do so and designed for parents trying to get their act together.

Shirley asked a question of the group when commenting that foster parents feel invisible sometimes. "When you see a disheveled mom, hair a mess and maybe missed a shower, kids barely corralled and pulling candy off the shelves. What do you think of that mom?"

The first answer: "Glad it's not me."

"The reality is," Shirley continues, "this is the least of her problems. She has been dealing with things that only she sees." But people around her judge her by her immediate circumstance. Do we take the time to understand the context behind what's going on?

Our society, when we see misbehavior, we think bad parent. Or, that kid's gonna be a criminal when he grows up.

Normally, this isn't a kid's willful disobedience but survival tactics. That foster mom is more concerned with making sure that kid feels loved and protected than how she appears to others.

You can say what you will about DHS but the people that work behind those walls give their heart and soul every day for those kids. We may not understand all that goes on but they're there to protect that child and help those families climb back out of the gutter they found themselves in.

The turnover for a caseworker is about seventeen months. So now kids have that stability hit.

More about REACH ... Our Programs. EveryChildYamhill.org is community mobilization.

YamhillCounty.RoyalFamilyKids.org is camp for kids age 7-11 who are, or have been, in foster care. TeenReachYC.com is for kids age 12-15.



Many of these kids would never make it through a conventional camp for behavior issues. One girl, for example, was really obnoxious kicking walls, shining flashlights in sleeping camper faces, screaming. She had been the subject of child pornography since the age of five.

Now we have COVID in the mix and they can't leave the house. Visit [Every Child Oregon.org/MyNeighbor](http://EveryChildOregon.org/MyNeighbor) to help with baby items, toiletries, gift cards, educational supplies, groceries and cash.

We all can make our own difference in our own way.