



TITLE GAMES SET

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VENTURA COUNTY STAR

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\$1.00

Town hall to tackle care

■ Meeting set for prospective foster parents

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People interested in becoming foster parents in Ventura County are invited to a town hall meeting Saturday in Ventura.

Organizers said the free event will bring together an array of people touched by foster care, including foster families, experts in the field and community leaders.

"We want to raise awareness of the need in Ventura County and celebrate how the community is coming together," said Elizabeth Thasihah, foster care recruitment manager in the Ventura County Human Services Agency.

The agency historically has struggled to find enough foster parents for the number of children needing care. But the stakes have risen with a state mandate to phase out group homes, said county Supervisor Steve Bennett, who is scheduled to speak at the event.

"If you phase out group homes, that means you have to have more foster homes," he said.

About 500 foster and relative caregivers are helping raise children who have been removed from their homes in the county. Thasihah said she is looking for 200 more foster parents to provide high-quality matches.

Particularly needed are homes where foster children can be raised with their siblings, and those in communities where the child has been attending school and made friends.

Only about half of the 1,000 foster children in the county are placed in homes with all their siblings, Thasihah said. About a third have no sibling in their foster homes, she said.

A panel of speakers with firsthand knowledge of foster care is planned. Its members include foster youth and parents and a birth mother unable to keep her children. The group will answer questions from the audience, officials said.

Information will also be offered on how to become a mentor or volunteer, officials said.

The event is scheduled from 9-11 a.m. at the Human Services Agency office at 855 Partridge Drive, Ventura.

Registration is encouraged but not required.

To respond, visit www.fostervckids.org and click on the Facebook link.

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Steve Bennett,
Ventura County supervisor