

# County agency highlights teens for National Adoption month

## Older children stay in foster care longer

By CHARLIE WRIGHT  
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The Charles County Department of Social Services held an informational event Tuesday at P.D. Brown Library regarding foster care and the foster care system in honor of National Adoption Awareness Month.

A handful of prospective parents and interested residents gathered in a corner of the library to listen to a presentation from CCDSS recruiter and trainer Claudelle Parchment, who discussed the importance of finding homes for children in

need. The county currently has 78 children in need of foster homes, for reasons ranging from abuse and neglect to abandonment.

"We're hoping that you will recognize that you are a force for change and you will positively impact the lives of our children," Parchment said.

The CCDSS is focusing on teenagers in particular, as more than half of the children in need are 13 years of age or older. This course of action aligns with the overall goal of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) over the past two years, specifically targeting teenagers for suitable homes. The initiative for 2017, provid-

ed by the Child Welfare Information Gateway, a branch of HHS, centers on the theme of "Teens Need Families, No Matter What."

"Many of these young people are less likely to be adopted, often because of their age, and will too often age out of the system without a stable support system," explains the Child Welfare website. "Securing lifelong connections for these teens, legally and emotionally, is an urgent need and critical component of their future achievement and overall well-being."

Parchment detailed the three types of foster care, which are emergency, restrictive and regular. The variants are based on

length of care and needs of the child, as well as what the parents can offer. Emergency homes provide brief stays in urgent situations, restrictive homes are used when the child is known or related to the foster parents, while regular homes house children who have been in the system for 15 of the past 22 months.

Eligibility for foster care is fairly simple and comparable to the average job qualifications in the county. Parents must be residents of Charles County, at least 21 years old and agree to a criminal background check. They can be single or married, live in a house or apartment, and must demonstrate financial

stability. Parchment said there is no specific income level or salary that needs to be met, but it has to be clear that the parents aren't only interested for the foster care stipend.

Undeterred by technical difficulties, Parchment played a video highlighting several teens in the Charles County system in need of loving families. The children talked about their interests and desires, with each sharing the common goal of finding a stable home. Parchment reiterated the needs of individuals in this age bracket, urging the audience to consider caring for them.

"They tend to linger in the foster care system a little longer," Parchment said. "If you see any of our ads, we focus more on the fact that we need foster parents for the teenage population, because they're the ones that stay

in the system." Foster homes do their best to care for these children, but permanent residences remain the goal. Foster children do have opportunities relating to their situation, like free college tuition, but Parchment explained any benefits are overshadowed by the specter of longterm psychological distress.

"The longer a child stays in foster care, the more difficult it is for them to connect," Parchment said. "The connection to humans, the connection to each other, they lose that. Every time they move from one home to the next, it creates a trauma, it erodes their ability to trust, it erodes their ability to connect with other people."

The CCDSS is located in La Plata and can be reached at 301-392-6400 for those interested in adoption or foster care.

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# Names, cause of fires released for recent county fatalities

## Bryans Road and Waldorf fires ruled accidental

By JESSI STICKEL  
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The Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office has released the names of the two victims who died in two separate fires on Nov. 15, and ruled the cause of fire accidental for both.

At approximately 5:40 a.m. a 911 call came in reporting someone possibly trapped in a trailer located on the property of 1775 Marhsall Hall Road in Bryan's Road. The victim has been identified as 53-year-old Duane F. Crispell, who was the caretaker for the animals at that location. His cause of death has been ruled smoke inhalation and thermal burns by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, according to

the release. Investigators from that fire have ruled it accidental due to overloaded electrical circuits.

At approximately 3:21 p.m. a 911 call came in from a medical alert reporting a fire in a camper at 11950 Goldie Farm

Place in Waldorf. The victim has been identified as 56-year-old Patricia M. Mahoney, who was unable to escape the fire due to being paralyzed. No one was home at time of the fire to assist her. Her cause of death has been ruled smoke inhala-

tion and thermal burns by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Investigators from that fire have ruled it an accidental due to careless smoking, according to the release.

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A complete list of open positions can be found at [MedStarSouthernMaryland.org/Careers](http://MedStarSouthernMaryland.org/Careers). If you are unable to attend the Job Fair, you can apply online or call our Human Resources department at **301-877-4567**.

  
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