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Three-year-old adopted son John stays close to his mother Linda when there are guests at the Monks. At other times, he loves to romp and play.



Charles Monk of Bloomfield Hills gives their 10-week-old foster daughter Kammie some tender after dinner care. The baby, who is unable to see, listens to the chatter and romping of the other

children and giggles now and then. Linda and Charles Monk have been licensed foster parents for several years and have adopted two of their foster children. (Photos by Cynthia Abatt)

Fostering with the Monks

Family night is a romp

By ALICE COLLINS
Suburban Life Editor

I told my husband when we got married that I wanted 12 children," said Linda Monk, seated on the floor in the large

bright living room of the Monk family's Bloomfield Hills home.

Three-year-old John was propped on her lap and the other six members of the family were nearby, leaning on her, talking or doing nothing at all.

I think I've changed my mind about having that many," she continued. But if we had another bedroom, we'd probably ask for another one, maybe John's age.

On no, ignored the others. Then I'd have trouble with all my teeth," said Chuck, 16, who often romps with his youngest brother.

John stayed in the mouth while we were playing, and I got an abscessed tooth. John thinks I'm immortal," said Chuck, giving John off of his mother's lap to have another round.

IT WAS AFTER DINNER on a family night at the Monks. Linda and her husband Charles, known by his friends as Chap, monks are licensed foster parents.

Of their six children, Darrell, 17, Chuck, 16, and Larna, almost 12, were born to them. John, who came to them as a foster child when he was three weeks old, is now their adopted son.

Angie, 14, came last spring as a foster daughter, and the Monks are in the process of adopting her.

Kammie, 10 weeks old, is in their foster care.

Charles Monk was raised in foster homes in the Birmingham area. "I guess that had something to do with my wanting to take in foster children. And Linda's a natural-born mother," Monk said.

THE MONKS WERE LICENSED through the Oakland County Department of Social Services, which is looking for additional foster families, said Karen North, a licensing social worker with the department.

There are so many children who need homes and to be loved," said Monk. "It seems selfish of us to draw ourselves out of the picture when we are families."

Then there are some people who have

such a bad attitude about it," Monk continued. "This is things like, 'Oh, you don't know anything about these children.'"

Well, we've had some interesting experiences, but we've never had any trouble. Adopting John was quite a struggle and took a long time because his back. We're thankful that it all worked out. Their foster daughter, Kammie, is also black.

I WOULDN'T WANT THE public to get the idea that it is the usual thing for a white family to be permitted to adopt a black child," said Carrie Wendt, John's adoption social worker.

In fact, it's very unusual and it doesn't happen until after an effort has been made to place the child with an eligible black family.

John suffers from sickle cell anemia and allergies. And in his case, it was felt the Monks were the right psychological parents for him.

We felt they would be better able to deal with his future than someone else would," Mr. Wendt said.

John shares a bedroom with his brother Chuck, who listens and tends to him during the night if there are any problems, Mrs. Monk said.

"JOHN CAVES WITH the neighbor children and is really accepted," said Monk. "Yes, I'm sure we'll have some tough bridges to cross as he grows older. Hopefully, we'll be able to meet the challenge."

Angie, who was in mother foster homes before joining the Monks last March, is in the fourth grade at East Hills Junior High School.

She babysits, loves to talk with her friends on the telephone, is doing well in school and a few months ago started taking piano lessons.

When she talks with her new mother and father, Mom and Dad, come out as easily during the conversation as if she'd been saving it to them all of her life.

"MOVES ALWAYS SAYING, 'Clean up, clean up, pick up, pick up,'" said Angie. "Yes, and if I went away for a week," said Mrs. Monk, "and nobody said, 'Clean

up, clean up, pick up, pick up,'" we wouldn't be able to get the door open."

"Yes, we would," Mom," answered Angie. "I think I'd finally get tired of the mess and clean it up."

"MOVES A GLUTTON for punishment," said Chuck, whose sense of humor shows up often. "You have to have a sense of humor around here," he says.

Chuck and Darrell are 11 months apart in age and both go to Lather High School. Both also have dirt bikes and play guitars. But we have different tastes," said Darrell. "We're playing together just once, he continued, and it didn't work out. He likes country and I play rock."

They practice in their bedrooms. Darrell is part of a newly formed group that hopes to find jobs.

Larna, in the sixth grade at Eastover Elementary School, plays the violin, likes to make art and is happy with the little kids.

Kammie has a serious eye problem but loves to be among the rest of the family, listening and checking now and then.

THE MONKS ARE MEMBERS of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, having converted to the Mormon faith as a family in 1971.

Sixty-nine percent of the family's social life centers around the church, said Monk.

He is the service manager of Star Line Motors, in Southfield. Mrs. Monk enjoys sewing and making projects. But I guess my family is really my hobby," she said.

"I have a lot of people asking me about becoming a foster family," said Mrs. Monk. "But often they are afraid to get started. They're concerned that the social worker will be visiting their house and that everything won't be just right."

But it's not that way at all," she continued. "She's not looking to see how good a housekeeper you are. My social worker is my good friend now. I enjoy it when she comes to the house."



Larna Monk, almost 12, (left) likes to macrame and also makes planter hangings like her mother. John likes to help, too.

Oakland County seeks stable foster families for child care program

The Oakland County Department of Social Services is looking for stable families interested in serving as foster parents. Two-parent families are preferred, but single parents with a spouse who works full-time are also acceptable, according to the department.

The licensing process takes three months. Parents interested in applying must call Ms. North at 483-1661.

Eligibility is tested at this time. Ms. North said, "are times for teenagers for riding groups, two or three children and for special needs children, as has the hand."

Some of the requirements necessary to get a foster license, Ms. North said, are a clean and safe house, enough sleeping space, good health and emotional stability on the part of the family and financial stability.

This doesn't necessarily mean affluent homes," said Ms. North. "Many of our best foster families are from lower middle-class income groups."

"THERE ARE SOME of the qualities of good foster families," she said. "Stable families who are generally interested in helping a child, and who have time and interest to give."

"Parents who can accept a child, as he or she is, and be willing to work with him or her on problems."

"Persons who can understand the needs of children. Foster children tend to have

more problems than most children. Many are unaware or victims of abuse or neglect."

All have suffered the trauma of separation from a natural family.

Foster children tend to have a poor self-image and to be emotionally immature. Families are needed who are understanding of these problems and who will be patient and tolerant in working with foster children.

Families who are open to new ideas in child rearing and willing to work with the agency and with the natural parents in some cases.

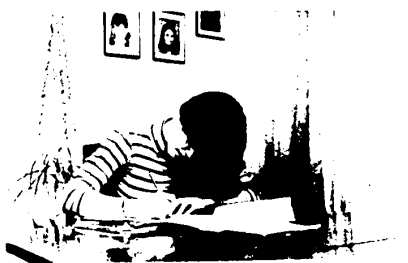
COURSES DESIGNED to assist foster parents are offered by Eastern Michigan University in Oakland County at Berkley High School and at Waterford North High School.

Several series of eight week classes are offered. Some of the sessions cover fostering the teenager, guiding the sexual development of the foster child, handling lying, dishonesty and destructive behavior, fostering the battered and abused child, and legal aspects of foster parents.

Foster parents can receive payment for attending classes, said Ms. North.

Foster families also receive payment for caring for foster children," said Ms. North. "But the rate is low, and no one could earn money doing foster care."

The money is to help cover the child's expenses. The agency covers all medical expenses and provides a minimum amount of clothing.



Fourteen-year-old Angie, doing her homework, came to the Monks last spring as a foster child and they are now in the process of adopting her.



Chuck, 16, enjoys playing country music on his guitar. Brother Darrell plays rock and they practice in separate rooms.



Darrell, 17, spends a lot of time riding and repairing the Ossa dirt bike he bought for himself.