

Foster parents being recruited

Neveau-Spangenberg

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Neveau of Farmington Hills announce the engagement of their daughter Mary to Albert C. Spangenberg son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert C. Spangenberg of Farmington Hills.

The bride-to-be and her fiance are both graduates of North Farmington High School. She is employed by Krapohl Ford Dealership of Mt. Pleasant. He will graduate from Central Michigan University in May with a master's degree in business administration. A March wedding is planned.

In an effort to enlist and hold more quality foster homes in each county, the Michigan Department of Social Services awarded a contract to the Michigan Foster Parent Association to conduct a statewide foster home recruiting campaign during the next year.

The grant is \$59,755 for the period from now through Aug. 31, 1980.

Potential beneficiaries of the project include all public and private foster family care agencies in the state, new and experienced foster families, and foster children — particularly those with special needs that may make them hard to place.

Mary Ball Hodges, director of the recruiting project and an MFPA area vice president in Kalamazoo, said the primary goal of the campaign will be "to increase the number of quality, trained foster families available for Michigan's foster children with emphasis on families that can give care to special needs children."

"First, DSS and many other agencies don't have one person to just do full-time recruiting," she said. "And who better than foster parents know what to look for in others as potential foster parents?"

"Most of us have talked others into foster parenting already," she added.

Ms. Hodges said she plans to use the entire network of MFPA members around the state to work on the campaign with special attention being placed on small communities "that don't get the recruitment attention the large cities usually do."

MFPA's efforts will begin with the mailing of a needs survey to all public and private foster care agencies it can identify in Michigan.

Results will be tabulated by county or community and then shared with those agencies that responded. The survey will also serve as an indication of which agencies want foster parent candidates referred to them by MFPA.

find any chronic weaknesses in the foster care system, and also to re-recruit those who have left or diminished their services.

Dropouts from foster parenting are a major concern of state foster care officials. MDSS, for example, lists more than 7,400 families on its current foster care rolls, and the total has risen by about 100 families in each of the last three years.

However, one MDSS licensing analyst estimated that about 2,000 (or 27 percent) of the foster families drop out each year to be replaced by 2,100 new ones. A foster care specialist in MDSS attributed much of the turnover to parents who did not understand the demands of fostering when they started.

MFPA also plans to act as an intermediary between disgruntled foster parents and the agency involved, to recruit new foster parents by using the news media to announce needs in a particular locale, to neighborhood or community recruitment meetings, and to seek recommendations and referrals from active foster families to find other prospective foster parents.

The association will devote some of

its efforts to finding potential foster homes for special needs children (such as handicapped youngsters and older youth) by, among other things, raising public awareness of specific needs areas through announcements in the news media and meetings with special interest groups.

FINALLY, MFPA plans to provide pre-screening of potential foster families for the various agencies, to orient new foster parents to the system (including licensing procedures), to act as a referral mechanism for the agencies, and to conduct follow-up studies such as a six-month visit to new foster families to see if their needs are being met.

MDSS Director John T. Dempsey said he appreciated the willingness of the foster parents to undertake the project.

"The foster care program in Michigan is one of the best in the country, but there is a need for more foster parents and more foster homes here," he said.



David-McCarthy

Mr. and Mrs. Norman David of Farmington Hills announce the engagement of their daughter, Holly Anne, to Matthew J. McCarthy, son of Mr. and Mrs. John T. McCarthy of Brighton. An August wedding is planned.

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