Foster Care Rewarding

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Women’s News Editor

The tantalizing aroma of chicken simmering in rich brown gravy drifts from the kitchen. Visitors are welcomed with a cup of good Cajun coffee and invited to join the family for dinner.

Hospitality and friendliness come naturally for Mr. and Mrs. Roy Goodie. And cooking is just one of the many duties she especially enjoys, because she knows it will be appreciated by her family — her very special family of five foster children.

The Goodies have three children of their own, but during the past 20 years have opened their home and their hearts to some 30 foster children under the foster care program of the Department of Health and Human Resources. The program is designed to provide a temporary family environment for children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot live in their natural homes. The Goodies are one of 2,000 families in Louisiana experiencing the joy and happiness which comes from seeing a child respond to love and trust, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

The goal of foster care is to eventually return the children to their natural parents. But, in the interim, the children are in need of love and guidance which can only be found in a family situation.

Mrs. Goodie recalls, as “though it were yesterday,” the very first child which she and her husband accepted into their family so many years ago.

“It was rainy, rainy day. I knew they would be hungry, so I fixed a big meal. When they arrived, the youngest one, who was two, wouldn’t stop eating. But the older one, who was three, cried. And then I cried and wondered what their mother was doing. We cried a lot that first day and I was up all night checking on them. But before long, they accepted us and we were one big happy family, something I’d always wanted.”

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Goodie have the children with old-fashioned ideals, but they know that “you can’t raise them like you were raised. Times have changed.” Each child has his or her duties to perform around the house and is expected to follow the rules of the house. This is sometimes hard at first because all of the children the Goodies have raised have been in foster homes before coming to the Goodies.

“Everyone has different ways of raising children, and each time these children have moved, they have had to adjust and start over. It’s hard on them and takes a lot of patience and understanding.”

There have been lots of happy times in the Goodie household. They live on a 20-acre farm near Judice and in the summer time the front pasture is a regular ball park. It is filled with neighborhood children playing ball and eating watermelon. The Goodies also own five horses and every child which has lived with them has learned to ride. Birthdays are real fun times, because it usually means a skating party. And there are always lots of pets to play with.

There have also been a few bad times, such as when one child had to have an emergency appendectomy. But the good times outweigh the bad times and Mrs. Goodie minimizes the rough times, preferring to remember the happy ones.

“The hardest times are goodbye times. It’s always hard to say goodbye to someone you love. But, many of them come back to visit and now they are even bringing their children. They call us ‘Grandma’ and ‘Grandpa.’”

Children in foster care often have physical or emotional problems which have resulted from neglect or abuse. They are going through a crisis and need someone they can trust.

The substitute living situation provided through foster care offers children an opportunity to grow and develop and offers the foster parents the reward of helping a child through a traumatic experience. Foster parents receive a monthly payment for each child, but this is usually the least of the rewards, especially doing these times of spiraling inflation. While in the care of foster parents, the children continue to work with social workers and generally visit their natural parents on a regular monthly basis.

At present, there are 8,000 foster children in Louisiana. They may continue under the foster care program until they are 18, unless they attend school. They may then remain under the program until they are 21.

The Lafayette Regional Office of Human Development serves eight parishes: Acadia, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, Evangeline, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion. Information concerning the program can be obtained by calling the Lafayette office at 302 Jefferson St., telephone 264-5255.

WELCOME TO OUR HOME — During the past 20 years, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Goodie have welcomed some 30 foster children into their home and hearts. There have been lots of happy times on the Goodie farm near Judice. One of the favorite hobbies of all of the children is horseback riding on one of the Goodie’s five horses, especially Tony, who receives a little loving care from one member of the Goodie family. Photo by Peter Piazza

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