

## **Fostering Together to partner with WSU Vancouver students in an effort to connect foster children with foster families**

**VANCOUVER, Wash. (XXXX, 2019)** – Fostering Together, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that foster children in Western Washington have access to safe homes, will partner with students from the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University Vancouver to launch a campaign aimed at raising awareness about the foster care crisis in Clark County. The campaign will launch in early 2020.

“We are thrilled to be working with these students,” said Peggy Devoy, program manager, Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families. Devoy oversees programs for recruiting and retaining licensed caregivers. “Finding homes for foster children is such an important cause but we’ve found that many people are simply unaware of our services or uninformed about the foster care system in general. We can’t wait to see how the students help us with our efforts to improve our communication and raise awareness about this cause.”

Using strategic communication to raise awareness about the needs of foster children and foster families is a large goal of this new partnership. Though representatives of Fostering Together regularly perform public outreach and speak to members of Washington State communities, they have found that it is not enough. The use of more effective and targeted communications will allow Fostering Together to better spread its message and meet its goal of raising awareness.

Nikki Hinshaw, assistant director of student involvement at WSU Vancouver, can speak to the importance of raising awareness about the needs of foster children. “As a foster parent myself, I know how hard it can be to reach potential foster parents and to get them to listen. Fostering is tough but at the end of the day it is so rewarding, so I think it is very important work that these students are doing.”

Raising awareness is an important first step to effect change in the foster care system because with awareness comes action. According to the Washington State department of Children, Youth and Families, there are generally around 9,000 children in foster care in Washington State at any given time but there are simply not enough resources to support them. In Clark County alone there are over 700 children in foster care but only about 230 homes for them to stay in, according to Fostering Together liaison Kim Glover.

This partnership between Fostering Together and WSU Vancouver students will work to not only boost awareness about the needs of foster children and foster families, but will provide real

solutions for how the community can more effectively communicate the need to recruit and retain foster parents.

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### **About Fostering Together**

Fostering Together is dedicated to finding and supporting foster families in Western Washington. Developed in partnership between the state of Washington and Olive Crest, the program aims to ensure that safe, loving foster families are available to meet the diverse needs of abused and neglected youth. Fostering Together aims to increase the number of foster families across the state, help families with the licensing process, and provide ongoing support to ensure their success.

### **About WSU Vancouver**

As one of six campuses of the Washington State University system, WSU Vancouver offers big-school resources in a small-school environment. The university provides affordable, high-quality baccalaureate- and graduate- level education to benefit the people and communities it serves. As the only four-year research university in Southwest Washington, WSU Vancouver helps drive economic growth through relationships with local businesses and industries, schools and nonprofit organizations.

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