No need to be a superhero

TO A child in foster care, you will be amazing. You can help change a young life for the better. And you don’t have to be a superhero or a fully trained social worker to do it. You just need to be someone who is willing to care for — and care about — children.

In Victoria there is a shortfall of more than 300 foster carers each year. These carers are sorely needed to help care for children and young people who, for a variety of reasons are unable to live with their families.

People from all walks of life across the state are opening their hearts and their homes to children and young people in need. But many more foster carers are needed.

Most people naturally assume you have to be a special person to be a foster carer. In some ways that’s true, because deciding to open your home to a child in need is a very special thing to do. But in fact, it’s the little things you can do that will make you amazing to a child, whether it’s reading them a bedtime story or taking them to the footy.

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?
The role of the Foster Care program is to provide safe and supportive homes for children and teenagers when they are unable to live with their own families.

Children can be in care for as little as an overnight stay to a period of several years, depending on their circumstances. Foster carers are able to specify the length and type of care they provide.

If you do take on the responsibility of being a foster carer, you won’t be on your own, you will be supported in your role by one of Victoria’s foster care agencies. They will be there, on hand to help you care for the child and provide you with round the clock support.

To see the shy child who came to us grow to become so confident was just amazing

FOSTER CARE SNAPSHOT

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
At June 30, 2015, there were 1588 children and young people in foster care in Victoria.

NUMBER OF CARERS NEEDED
About 300 additional foster carers across the mix of care types are required every year to meet the needs of children requiring home-based care. There is a need for a range of carers including; respite, emergency, short and long term.

ACTIVE FOSTER CARERS
There are almost 2000 active foster carers in Victoria. This figure is made up of carers providing support across a range of emergency, short term, respite and long term placements.

You can make a child feel special by doing small everyday things like sharing a meal at the dinner table. If you could do something this small, but this amazing and you’re interested in relief, weekend or long term foster care, visit fosteringconnections.com.au or call 1800 013 088.

Open your heart. Open your home.
The questions answered

NATURALLY, anyone considering becoming a foster carer has many questions on their mind about their suitability, their responsibilities and how to take the first steps. Here we cover five key questions to help you on the way:

WHO CAN BE A FOSTER CARER?
Foster carers come from all walks of life, backgrounds, ages and experiences. They are just like you. Foster carers can be single people, couples, families, people that work or study or those that are retired. Anyone over 21 who can offer a child or teenager a secure, caring environment can apply to become a foster carer.

HOW DO I BECOME A FOSTER CARER?
The first step is to register your interest through the website fosteringconnections.com.au or the 24/7 inquiry line. They will then direct your inquiry to a foster care agency in your area. You will be invited to attend an information session and submit an application. A training and assessment process then gets underway. You will also need to complete the relevant checks required by Victorian law in order to work with children. This ensures every child is placed into a safe and welcoming environment, and helps you prepare for becoming a successful foster carer.

WHAT TYPES OF CARE ARE AVAILABLE?
You can care for a child overnight, for a month, or longer — it all depends on the needs of the child and the option that best suits you. When you become a foster carer, you are able to specify the length and type of care you provide, whether offering

respite for another carer for a weekend, or looking after a child for a few weeks, months or even years. Whether you’re interested in providing short or longer term care, there will be options to suit you.

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO NEED FOSTER CARE?
Those in foster care are just like any other children and young people except for a variety of reasons, they are unable to live with their family. They come into care at all ages, from babies to teenagers, and across all cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. More than anything, children in foster care need someone to provide a stable and loving home life, and do the little things, such as

reading a bedtime story or taking them to the footy, just like other children and young people.

WHAT SUPPORT DO I RECEIVE AS A CARER?
When you become a foster carer, you won’t be on your own. You will be the most important member of a team committed to providing support for a child in need. That team will include trained caseworkers who will interact with you throughout your time as a foster carer. You will be provided with training and given access to a range of ongoing support aimed at developing your skills and giving you insights into the experiences of the children you will be caring for. You will also receive fortnightly financial support towards the costs involved with caring for a child.

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