

Answering Children's Need for Forever Homes

BRADENTON HERALD EDITORIAL | Groups on noble mission to comfort foster kids

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Today, some 500 girls and boys await adoption in Florida -- children abandoned, neglected or abused by their birth parents, taken by the courts and sheltered in foster care. The most difficult to place in a forever home are sibling groups and older children, especially teenagers. Some wait months, some years.

The Florida Department of Children and Families works diligently to place children as quickly as possible but the need is great. Guardian Angels of Southwest Florida, in partnership with the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, hopes to fulfill the dreams of quite a few of those foster kids with plans to build up to nine homes near Ellenton.

That remarkable and noble goal will spare quite a few children from uncertainty and anxiety about their upbringing and future. Stability is vital to shaping youth into well adjusted, productive adults.

Perhaps most impressive, the Guardian Angels campus will provide homes large enough to accommodate sibling groups -- even four to five children. The Bradenton-based organization hopes to house 72 youngsters and foster parents on the seven-acre-plus campus.

But the Angels need additional contributions, with a capital campaign set for a summer launch and a goal of \$1.1 million. The faith-based Christian organization already has a significant amount in the bank along with several major pledges.

The cost of each home runs in the neighborhood of \$250,000 to \$300,000, but contractors have signed up to provide work at little or no cost -- which will knock the price down. Bobbie Price, Guardian Angels president, hopes to break ground on the first two homes in the next year.

This project is quite a step up from the Guardians Angels' initial plan about four years ago for one large foster home. Then came the partnership with Florida Baptist Children's Homes, which will staff the homes and provide services for the children. With the realization of the larger plan, the Manatee County facility would join Florida Baptist Children's Homes' seven other residential campuses in the state.

Guardian Angels board members Ed and Joanne Dick are well known child advocates, having served as adoptive and foster parents and role models for generations -- dating back to 1957. They will be part of the team raising money not only for construction but for ongoing operational costs.

"We're trying to make forever homes for children," Ed Dick says.

Indeed, with 29 sibling groups currently hoping to find togetherness, family and stability, that is a grand mission -- one that deserves the community's support.

If you can help, contact the Guardian Angels, 1429 60th Ave. W., Suite 200, Bradenton, FL 34207; (941) 792-5374; or email bobbieprice@gmail.com.

Read more: <http://www.bradenton.com/2011/05/12/3187260/answering-childrens-need-for-forever.html#ixzz1OcNiPEKO>