



SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

Hello Friends!

It's been a busy spring with lots of celebratory activities for those who are mobilized around our mission to lift up children and families impacted by foster care in Central Oregon. Social workers, volunteers, community partners, and the families we serve—all received the spotlight and, in different ways, a special thanks over the past few months because gratitude is so important in our realm of care. Again, thank you for all you do! We are meeting the tangible needs of so many in foster care and encourage everyone to keep up the kindness!

Of note, we'd like to announce that we're rolling out a new program, Homes for Homes, to boost foster-care recruitment numbers. Homes for Homes will allow real estate organizations to donate a portion of their sales transactions to Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO), giving realtors, lenders and escrow agents a chance to share ECCO's mission, support our cause, and hopefully open clients' hearts to fostering. While we have approximately 300 youth placed in 82 foster care homes throughout our tri-county region, there remains a serious shortage of foster homes. In fact, it's a crisis situation.

We have set benchmarks, hoping to address the gap within the next few years. We know the decision to foster is big one. But for so many families, it's the best decision of their lives.

In the coming months, look for more communications around this program. And if you're interested in becoming an official Homes for Homes Real Estate Partner, please [contact us](#) today!



Melissa Williams / Executive Director
everychildcentraloregon.org
541.610.9455
m.williams@everychildcentraloregon.org

SOCIAL WORKERS GET GIFTED WITH FUN EVENTS

(PLUS A RARE CHANCE TO TURN OFF WORK, BOND AND HAVE FUN!)

While social work is ranked by [Forbes](#) as the Top 7th most meaningful job, there's no doubt that's it's very, very challenging. And that's why Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) capitalized on National Social Worker Month (March) to put on fun, regionally-based events for staff at Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and Child Protective Services at The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

"These events were so appreciated and impactful on the various staffs as it gave them the opportunity to 'turn work off' and simply hang out and enjoy one another's company," says Brianna Rogers, ECCO's Community Investment Coordinator. "They've been so stressed throughout COVID and receiving such little face-to-face support due to COVID restrictions, so this felt like a true morale win and team-bonding opportunity."

Of note, various faith and business partners stepped in to sponsor the events and provide gifts, making the celebration a broader, more meaningful community experience:



- Bend ice skating Night, 47 in attendance, sponsored by [Journey Church](#), as well as [Nancy P's Café & Bakery](#), which provided delicious treats, and [Bellataza](#), which contributed a hot cocoa bar.
- Axe-throwing Night at Bend Axe Throwing, 26 in attendance, sponsored by [Westside Church](#).
- Duffy's Karaoke, 16 in attendance—thank you for your ongoing support!
- Madras Bowling, 31 in attendance, sponsored by [First Interstate Bank of Madras](#).
- Prineville Paint Night, 18 in attendance, sponsored by [Fortis Construction](#).

"Many times, I was told how much the staff appreciated us taking the time to provide them the opportunity to relax, bond and have fun together," Rogers says. "Getting to laugh and goof around as a group brought smiles to everyone's faces. We are so grateful to them as well as our amazing community partners whose care and contributions made these events such a success!"

138

**#SOCIALWORKERSCelebrated
DURING NATIONAL SOCIAL
WORKER MONTH (MARCH)**

'CHEERS TO THE YEAR' EVENT PACKS IT IN

Springtime. Masks off. Life somewhat back to normal. Events back on! There's been so much to celebrate lately—and, tapping into the spirit, Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) upped the celebratory ante with its recent "Cheers to the Year" event.

Taking place in May at [Open Space Event Studios](#) in Bend, the evening included a short presentation by Melissa Williams, our executive director, who gave an ECCO impact update, plus an overview of our next steps and dire foster-home recruitment needs. Specifically, the audience learned more about our recruitment goals while enjoying complimentary appetizers provided by Open Space Event Studios, as well as beer donated by [Good Life Brewing](#).

"We've done really well mobilizing the community to embrace our mission through volunteering and giving," Williams says, acknowledging the outpouring of support from people who committed that evening to three-year financial pledges as well as [Hayden Homes](#), which gifted ECCO with a \$10,000 donation. "So now we just need to really build out our foster care recruitment efforts. The need is really quite severe, actually critical."

Shifting away from future-casting, ECCO staff also spotlighted and celebrated its partners and volunteers through a dedicated awards program. The following awards were given out to those who really have lived out ECCO's mission while rallying others to do so in the process:



Foster Parent of the Year: Kathy Lake, nominated by ODHS

Foster Parent of the Year, Warm Springs: William and Paige Gehm, nominated by Child Protective Services (CPS) with The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

ODHS Social Worker of the Year: Joe Loeb with ODHS

Social Worker of the Year: Alveda Charley, CPS with The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

Partner of the Year 2021: R&H Construction, playground for CPS with The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

Volunteer of the Year: Julie Poulin

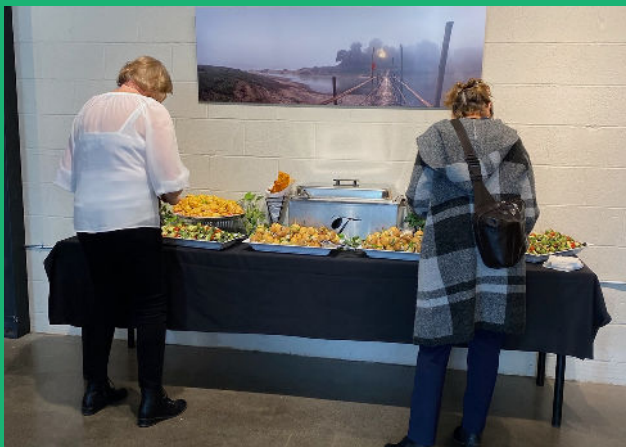
STORY CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

'CHEERS TO THE YEAR' CONTINUED

In addition to these recipients, in attendance that evening were dozens of community partners, volunteers, social workers, foster family members, ECCO staff and board members, Central Oregon citizens, and both current government officials and candidates.

"Our organization is still in its infancy and yet it was really incredible to look around the room and see so many faces, so much support, and such galvanization around the foster-care cause," Williams says. "None of this would be possible without each and every one of those people, as well as so many who could not make it that evening but were appreciated all the same. We felt so honored to celebrate all this positivity, the accomplishments, the people behind it, and our potential to do even more in the next few years!"

Before more casual mixin' and minglin' put a close to the evening, ECCO hosted a 45-minute panel on The State of Foster Care. Joining Williams at the table were Megan Riffle, Program Manager at ODHS Child Welfare, and Cecilia Collins, Director of Child Welfare for The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. ECCO appreciates all their valuable preparation, participation and valuable points!



HAPPY HAPPENINGS FOR FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH



May is Foster Care Awareness Month, an opportunity to acknowledge all who have mobilized around our mission. As part of a large network of foster-care organizations throughout the United States, Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) uses this time to renew its commitment to ensuring a bright future for the more than 407,000 children and youth in foster care nationwide, honoring those making a meaningful difference in their lives.

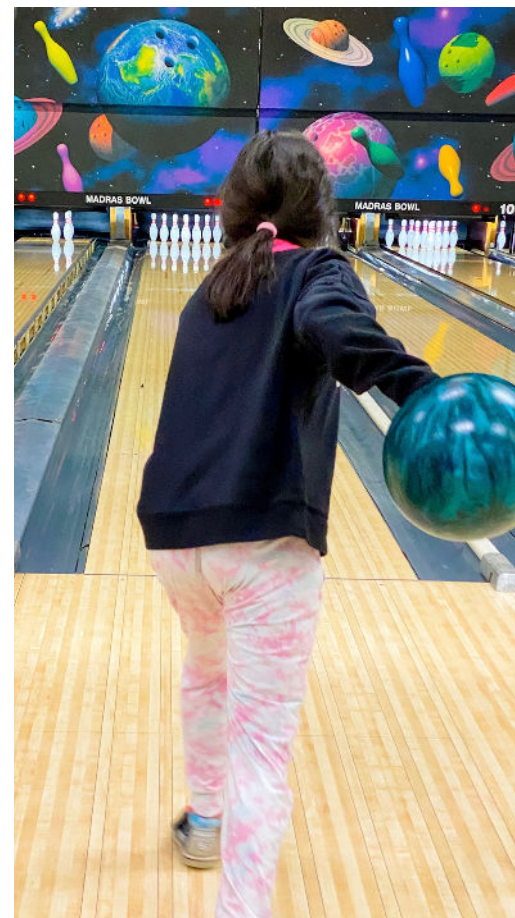
What did that look like locally? Free Foster Fun Nights in each of the tri-counties we represent! Businesses and both faith and community partners opened their doors and their wallets to help make these private events a success, giving kids the opportunity to play alongside their families, connect with their social service representatives, and have exciting experiences right in their back yard, including:

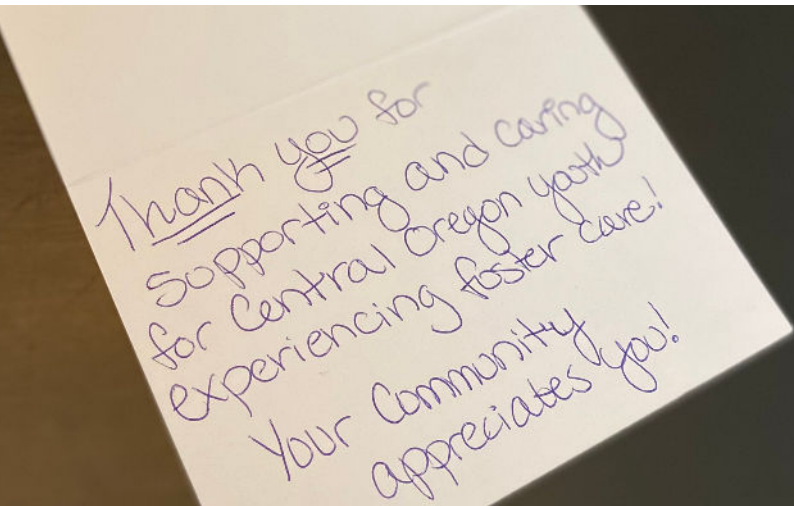
- Mountain Air and Bend Rock Gym play time in Bend, sponsored by [New Hope Church](#)
- Jordan World Circus in Prineville, with tickets compliments of the [Redmond Kiwanas](#)
- Redmond and Madras pool parties, with cool pool toys and swag donated by [Antioch Church](#)

A huge thank you to our Foster Fun Night sponsors—we couldn't have done it without you, nor others, such as the Steek and Hurd families as well as [Bennington Properties](#), which provided snacks, gifts and prizes.

In addition, we'd like to highlight [Redmond Spirit Foundation](#), which donated \$2,000 towards Flash Boxes for Redmond foster providers and the children in their care; over a dozen flash boxes were delivered throughout Redmond by volunteers from [Hayden Homes](#). And, we also want to give a shoutout to three city councils...Bend, Redmond and Madras...which took the time during their May meetings to make a formal National Foster Care Awareness Month proclamation.

"It's always helpful when our government leaders boost awareness and encourage people to look into ways to help," says Melissa Williams, ECCO's executive director. "It's just a formal, very important way for them to share with the community that our foster-care needs, and what we and all our regional partners are doing to address it, are a big deal. We are grateful for that acknowledgment!"





My NeighbOR is an emergency response system, serving Oregon's most vulnerable children and youth. We are connecting goods and services from community members to families and youth impacted by foster care in our area.

You can provide supplies, create a Flash Box, purchase a gift card for a family, or give funds to help us meet the needs of vulnerable families. [Sign up here!](https://everychildcentraloregon.org/press/newsletter-spring-2022)



141

#MY NEIGHBOR REQUESTS MET IN CENTRAL OREGON, SPRING 2022

760

#INDIVIDUAL NEEDS & TANGIBLE GOODS PROVIDED BY MY NEIGHBOR IN CENTRAL OREGON, SPRING 2022

LOVE THIS NEWSLETTER?

Share If You Care!

Online Version Available at:

<https://everychildcentraloregon.org/press/newsletter-spring-2022>

CREATIVE DESIGN AND CONTENT
DONATED IN PART BY

Katie Roberts
WriteOnPoint! Communications