

Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner

Friday October 30, 6:00 P.M. – Water Tower Inn

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good evening, it's great to be with you tonight.

We're here of course to celebrate Foster Families and Foster Parents and the vital role that they play in the lives of young people in our community.

When you work in law, and also politics, you come to understand the importance of words and of being precise with them. And so, I think it is both telling and appropriate to reflect on the term "Foster Parents." That's what we call you many of you in the audience tonight. Not Foster Guardians, Foster Custodians or Foster Caretakers. Foster Parents.

Of course, when we hear the word parents, we immediately associate it with the idea of family. And really, this is what your role as Foster Parents involves: you invite others into your families, and make them larger.

You're opening up your homes and your hearts to take in children who are in need. Often times to children who are coming to you from very difficult circumstances, sometimes with behavioral problems, sometimes with developmental disabilities, sometimes with challenges that would test the resolve of anyone in a parental role.

You do this freely, willingly. Many of you have raised your own biological children. Many of you have aging relatives that you have to care for and worry about as well. Many of you have ample reason to decline to be Foster Parents. But you haven't. And I know that many of you have stepped up repeatedly to help children in need.

The family is the core unit of society. And I think most of us like to think that society—at its best—should resemble a family.

It should be a place where the strong help the weak, where the fortunate help the less so, and where those in need of support, get the support that they need. And that's what you are doing.

The role of a Foster Parent is a varied one. You help create positive memories. You're there to talk and you're there to listen. You're there to be a teacher, a mentor and a role model. You're there to provide stability and support to children who have often been bereft of it.

As I said earlier on, being a Foster Parent is a role that often comes with its share of challenges. But these are counterbalanced by the opportunity to make a real difference in the life of a young person. To help them learn, build character and grow as people.

Fulfilling this opportunity requires one big thing of Foster Parents and then many small things. The small things come easily, but they are important. It's reading a story at bedtime, it's helping with long division, it's a game of catch on the front lawn. It's a kind word and a helping hand up, and many other things besides, most that you do without a second thought.

The big thing is harder. The big thing is resolving to be a Foster Parent. To accept the responsibility, obligations and work that coming with caring for a child who is not your own, but who is in need of your care.

On behalf of the Office of Mayor and Sault Ste. Marie City Council, I'd like to thank you for accepting this responsibility and for stepping forward to take on both the big and the small things. I'd like to take a moment to thank all of you and say how grateful we are to you for your kindness, compassion and selflessness.

Thank you for choosing to make your respective families bigger, for the benefit of the family that is our community.

Thank you again for inviting me and please enjoy this evening's dinner.