

Item Title: Proclaim September as Kinship Care Month in Wake County to Recognize Kinship Caregivers

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners proclaims the month of September as Kinship Care Month and recognizes and honors Kinship Caregivers for the work of caring for relative children.

Item Summary:

Currently, over 160,000 youth in NC are being raised by their grandparents/other relatives. Over 4,630 of these young people reside in Wake County.

By joining with other states and counties that have proclaimed September as Kinship Care Month, Wake County will increase awareness and bring attention to the ongoing needs of Wake County children and youth being cared for by a relative caregiver. Kinship Care Month is both a celebration and an advocacy strategy. There is a great need for more programs and policies that support children being raised by relative caregivers. Proclaiming September as Kinship Care Month bring focus to the issues and may encourage more families to become involved in the lives of relative children.

Kinship Care is the raising of children by grandparents, other extended family members, and adults with whom they have a close family-like relationship such as godparents and close family friends because biological parents are unable to do so for whatever reason. Legal custody of a child may or may not be involved, and the child may be related by blood, marriage, or adoption. This arrangement is also known as "kincare" or "relative care." Kinship Care may reduce the number of home placements children experience; allow children to maintain connections to communities, schools, and family members; and increase the likelihood of eventual reunification with birth parents. It is less costly to taxpayers than formal foster care and keeps many children out of the foster care system.

Kinship Care is an indispensable resource, yet many of these families face daunting obstacles, with very little support. Children in their care have many of the same problems faced by foster children, including developmental disabilities, maltreatment, trauma, and loss. Additionally, the caregivers may be older, have limited resources, and must cope with the intergenerational issues associated with the birth parents' failure to parent successfully. Despite these obstacles, studies conclude that kinship homes provide as good if not better outcomes for children than foster care placements in the homes of strangers.

Children have better outcomes when they are raised in their extended family of origin. Kinship Care provides love and care in a familiar setting:

- Provides parents with a sense of hope that children will remain connected to their birth families.
- Enables children to live with people they know and trust.

- Reinforces a child's sense of cultural identity and positive self-esteem.
- Helps a child make and sustain extended family connections.
- Continues lifelong family traditions and memories.
- Supports the child in building healthy relationships within the family.
- Fulfills the child's need for safety and well-being and creates a sense of stability in the life of a child.

We give many thanks to our Wake County Kinship Caregivers. If it were not for them, we would see an inevitable increase of Wake County children in Foster Care.

Wake County Human Services Family Services Program has a strong partnership with community agencies “Carolina Preserves Cares” and the “Friends of the Guardian ad Litem” (GAL) that provides resources to youth in Kinship Care placement. These partnerships have afforded many kinship care families with financial assistance and access to community resources. The partnerships have also been extremely beneficial to the stability of youth in kinship care placements. A representative from Carolina Preserves Cares and the Friends of GAL will be present at the September 6, 2016 meeting.

Wake County’s Family Services Program requests that the Board of Commissioners join other states and counties and declare the month of September as Kinship Care Month.

Attachments:

1. 2016 Kinship Care Month Proclamation