

Clarence H. Carter, Director

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DES recognizes May as Foster Care Awareness Month

Several events planned to honor Arizona's children in foster care

PHOENIX – The Department of Economic Security (DES) recognizes the month of May as Foster Care Awareness Month with several awareness events planned throughout the month.

A recent DES report shows as of September 30, 2012, 14,111 children living in out-of-home care. That's an increase of 22 percent from the same time in 2011. Of those children, nearly 35 percent are between the ages of one and five.

"There's a great need for foster families in Arizona," said Director Clarence Carter. "For the first time ever we have licensed more homes than we have lost, but the need is still high. We need the community's help to meet our needs. These kids need good homes."

To honor the children in foster care, DES and its partners will be holding special events throughout the month and across the state. These events will be used to raise awareness of the need for more foster homes and to celebrate those currently living with foster parents.

"This month is about thanking all of Arizona's foster parents who go above and beyond to provide a healthy and nurturing home for our community's most vulnerable children," adds Carter. "Their commitment to these children is invaluable."

Major events include:

Ribbon Tying Event: On Wednesday, May 1, DES staff members will hang ribbons in the trees outside of their downtown Phoenix buildings. Each ribbon represents a child living in foster care in Arizona. DES will also hold a day-long education fair beginning at 9:30 a.m. at 1789 W. Jefferson Street in Phoenix.

The Annual Tucson Blue Ribbon Event: DES and the Foster and Adoptive Coalition of Tucson will join Thoroughbred Nissan on Saturday, May 4 for a family-friendly event to honor foster families in Pima County. The event, which includes bounce houses, food, music and a raffle, will end with the release of one balloon for each Pima County child in foster care. Thoroughbred Nissan is located at 5163 E. 22nd St. in Tucson. The event runs from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. More information is available on the [Tucson Blue Ribbon website](#).

Blue Ribbon Event: DES and the Arizona Blue Ribbon Coalition have invited Arizona's foster families to come to Chase Field on Saturday May 11 to enjoy an evening baseball game between the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Philadelphia Phillies in what is sure to be a fun-filled family event. More information is available on the [Arizona Blue Ribbon website](#).

Children's Heart Gallery Unveiling: DES will host the official statewide unveiling ceremony of the Children's Heart Gallery on Friday May 17. The Children's Heart Gallery is a traveling multi-media exhibit dedicated to finding adoptive homes for children currently in foster care. This event is private but media is welcome and encouraged to cover the event.

Anyone interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent is encouraged to visit the DES site [here](#).

Any media wishing to attend any of the events or looking for more information is asked to contact the PIO office at PIO@azdes.gov or calling 602-542-4296.

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