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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Foster Care Awareness Month: Open Your Home, Change a Life

Buffalo, NY – May is **Foster Care Awareness Month**, a time dedicated to recognizing the vital role foster parents play in the lives of children. Across Western New York, more than 300 children are currently waiting for the safety, stability and support that a foster home can provide. The number of foster homes needed continues to outnumber the available certified foster parents, especially those willing to care for siblings or older youth.

There is also a need for foster parents willing to serve in the Emergency After Hours Foster Care Program. This critical program provides short-term homes for children who are removed from unsafe situations during evenings, weekends or holidays when traditional placement resources are unavailable.

Throughout the month of May, Child and Family Services team members are available to speak with media outlets to offer expert insight for stories relating to Foster Care Awareness Month.

Nicole Luko, Program Manager of Foster Care and Adoption at Child and Family Services, says a major hurdle in recruiting new foster families is the widespread misunderstanding about what foster parenting truly involves.

"Foster care often gets misrepresented, and unfortunately, these misconceptions can discourage people who would otherwise make wonderful foster parents," Luko explained. "The reality is that you don't need to be perfect. You just have to be willing to open your heart and home to a child in need."

One common misunderstanding is that fostering always leads to adoption. In truth, the main goal of foster care is to support family reunification whenever safely possible. Adoption is considered only when reunification is not an option. Another myth is that foster children are placed randomly. In reality, foster parents and children are matched



carefully to ensure a placement that meets everyone's needs and builds a foundation for success.

"At its core, foster care is about giving a child a safe place to land during a difficult time," Luko added. "You aren't expected to replace a child's family. You just have to be a caring adult in their life."

Those interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent with Child and Family Services are encouraged to call (716) 882-0555 or email homefinding@cfsbny.org.

About Child and Family Services

Founded in 1873, Child and Family Services relies on its generations of expertise and multi-faceted programs to provide the people of its region with essential resources. C+FS is a not-for-profit organization accredited by the Council on Accreditation and a member agency of the United Way. It serves children, adults, and families in the eight counties of Western New York without regard to race, creed, national origin or economic status.

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