

# In SLO County, emergency foster care demand exceeds supply

A shortage of foster families means many kids are placed far from their communities

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San Luis Obispo County does not have enough emergency foster homes to meet the immediate needs of children removed from their families because of abuse or neglect.

The county contracts with the non-profit agency Family Care Network to supply nine emergency shelter beds, but currently there are only four shelter beds in the county.

There is a chronic shortage of families willing to provide emergency foster care in San Luis Obispo County,



Carla Branham, a SLO County emergency foster parent, plans to adopt one of her foster children, who is shown at the right.

TRIBUNE PHOTO  
BY DAVID  
MIDDLECAMP

said Debby Jeter, deputy director of Child Welfare Services.

"It's one of the hardest foster parent jobs to take on," Jeter said.

Emergency foster homes must be

available 24 hours a day and seven days a week to accept any child in need regardless of age or background. They must be ready to comfort a frightened child removed from a traumatic situa-

tion and placed in a stranger's home.

The children are often removed from their families late at night or on weekends. Many children are not being removed for the first time and can have emotional scars that make them challenging to deal with, Jeter said.

On average, a child remains at an emergency shelter for up to 30 days. When there is a shortage of long-term foster homes — which there currently also is — they stay longer.

Last year, Family Care Network placed 153 children in emergency foster care for a total of 7,936 days.

## Long travel

Three of the county's four shelter beds are in Atascadero. That means when children from the South County are removed from their families,

they are placed in an unfamiliar community.

Family Care Network would like to have two shelter beds in every city in the county to prevent removing children from their familiar communities, said Jim Daniels, executive director.

More shelter beds would also prevent children from spending hours in the car each day traveling to and from school, Daniels said. Foster children have a right to stay at their school, and schools must provide transportation for children placed outside their original community.

"It really creates a strain on the schools that have to transport kids from the North County to the South County," Daniels said.

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## Foster

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Letter said the transportation issue has created tension between the schools and the Department of Social Services, but someone always drives the child to his or her original school, even if that campus is in Nipomo and the child is placed in Paso Robles.

"We're not going to make a child change schools while we argue about money," Fitch said.

## Lifelong changes

Child Welfare officials would like to see more volunteers such as Carla Branhman, so children might not have to leave their community.

## Emergency shelter foster parents must:

- receive any child regardless of age or gender
- be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive children
- provide space for up to two children
- provide shelter for one to 30 days and sometimes longer
- commit to 12 months; and
- have one caregiver at home when children are present.

## Foster parents receive the following benefits:

- \$500 per bed per month, plus more when beds are filled, and
- respite counseling and support from professionals.

For more information about becoming an emergency shelter foster parent, call the Family Care Network at (805)535-0700 or visit [www.fcn.org](http://www.fcn.org).

Branham has opened her North County home to 233 children since she began providing emergency foster care in August 2002.

"That's how many kids who

have come through my home in four years, so imagine when you put all the homes together, how many kids there are that need help," Branhman said.

Providing emergency foster

care changed the way Branhman lives. Her spontaneity is limited: She has to check in on a regular basis and carry a cell phone at all times.

Family Care Network does make it possible for her to have a social life and date nights with her husband, she said.

"I'm not in this alone," Branhman said. "I have 24-hour help available to me if I need it."

A 4-year-old child who came to the Branhmans two years ago also changed the family. They fell in love with the girl, now 6, and decided to adopt her.

Branham said it was amazing to see how love and attention could remold a child.

"I've witnessed the healing in her," she said. "She's like a different child."

## OBITUARIES

## Rosa Romero

Rosa Romero, 87, of Oceano, passed peacefully on Wednesday, July 26, 2006, surrounded by loved ones.

Vestation will be from 1-7 p.m. Sunday, July 30, 2006, at Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel in Grover Beach, followed by the Vigil service at 7 p.m. The Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 10 a.m. Monday, July 31, at St Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Pismo Beach, and burial will follow in the Arroyo Grande Cemetery.

Rosa was born in Wasco, Calif., on Sept. 4, 1918, a daughter of the late Elnor and Maria Casas, and the beloved wife of the late Mariano "Chippie" Romero. Mariano and Rosa lived in Wasco and Bantownville, Calif., before moving in 1951 to Oceano, where Mariano was a barber for many years. They raised three sons: Arthur, who preceded Rosa in death, Tony and William. Willie.

Rosa enjoyed gardening and cultivating plants of all varieties, including flowers, vegetables and fruit trees. She had fun playing slot machines in Reno and Las Vegas and always came back a winner. Rosa was a talented crocheter, creating many Mid-State Fair award winning dolls. Another hobby she enjoyed was music. She enjoyed to play the piano at an early age, and later in life she played the organ. She passed on her love of music to her children and grandchildren, inspiring them to play instruments as well. Rosa had a passion for life; she gracefully passed on her wisdom, shared her faith and had a won-



derful sense of humor. She will be missed by not only her family, but also her many friends who will remember her kindness and compassion.

She will be greatly missed by many: son Tony; daughter-in-law Jeanette; grandchildren, Sammy and Jimmy; son Willie; daughter-in-law Jeannette; grandsons, Vincent and John; daughter-in-law Loraine; grandson Joseph; granddaughter-in-law Tanya; great-grandchildren, Joshua, Tyler, Jacob, Mackenzie and Madelyn; grandson Melvin; granddaughter-in-law Jeanne; great-grandchildren, Austin, David and Alex; grandson David; granddaughters, Lisa and great-grandchildren, Joseph and Nathaniel.

Her family thanks Cecilia

Cuevas, Evangelina Cashman

and Mitchell O'Grady for their

patient and loving attention to

Rosa.

Memorials in Rosa's honor

may be directed to Hospice Part-

ners of the Central Coast, or a

charity of one's choice.

Marshall-Spoo  
489-4552  
Grover Beach, CA

## John Bernard Przybyla

John Bernard Przybyla was born April 15, 1928, in Milwaukee, Wis., and passed away Wednesday, July 26, 2006, in San Luis Obispo.

After graduating in 1946 from St. Stanislaus High School in Milwaukee, John studied biological and cultural Science at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where he was also a U.S. Mail Carrier.

Later, he followed his family to the Monterey Peninsula where he served as a police officer, and met Donna Norbeck, whom he married in 1960. Continuing his long Civil Service career, John went to work for the United States Army in 1961. He served at Fort Ord and Camp Roberts before taking his family to Germany, where he served five years at United States Army bases in Schwabshaus Gmund and Karlsruhe. He returned to California

in 1976 and settled in Paso Rob-



many sports, including his grandchildren's softball, baseball games, soccer matches, water polo and gymnastics meets. His other interests included gardening, solitary, crossword puzzles and the local wine industry.

John was a devoted husband who cherished the time he spent with his family, especially his grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Stella and sister Dolores. He is survived by his wife Donna.



## Pamela J. Bromme

Pamela J. Bromme, 58, of Templeton, passed away on Monday, July 24, 2006, after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.

A celebration of her life will be held at a later date.

Pamela was born on July 7, 1948, in Los Angeles. A previous resident of Southern California, she has been a resident of Templeton for 14 years. Pamela loved gardening, decorating, shopping for shoes, her animals and was an avid Sprint car race fan, where she met her husband of 30 years. Pamela will be remembered for being a wonderful listener. The only way to have a friend is to be one, and Pam was the best: she goes to everyone the ultimate gift of true friendship.

Pamela was a devoted wife, daughter, sister, aunt and friend to so many. Her kind and caring nature will remain in our hearts forever.

She is survived by husband Bruce Bromme Jr. of Templeton; mother Helen (Bob) Brown of Paso Robles; sister and brother-in-law Tony; and Russell Noble of Medford, Ore.; loving niece Suzanne Noble of Bakersfield and numerous cousins. She is preceded in death by her father, David Baxton.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to: Woods Humane Society Animal Shelter, 575 Oklahoma Ave., San Luis Obispo, CA 93405.

## Olive Neufeld

Olive Joyce Neufeld, 90, died peacefully Thursday, July 27, 2006, at home.

A graveside service will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2006, at the Arroyo Grande Cemetery. Joyce, as she preferred to be called, was born in Hobart Tasmania, Australia, on Dec. 16, 1915. She journeyed to the United States with her mother and brother in 1917, settling first in Utah and eventually in California. She married Lemno S. Neufeld on April 13, 1935.

Joyce was a bookkeeper for many years, but her greatest joy was found in sewing, baking de-

## Fitch

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lice took the magazine a questioned the mother a teen, who said at the time nothing else had occurred between him and teacher.

A few hours later, mother called police again report that her son said F had engaged in oral copulation with him, which she confirmed to police in a sequent interview.

The boy told police F offered to pay him \$8 to after class at Daniel Le Middle School and help load some computer equipment into his car. The called his mother for permission and to tell her that F said he would drive home.

The teen said Fitch followed him into a conference room, turned off lights and ordered him to get down and pull his pants down because he wanted to form oral sex on him.

The boy said he scared of Fitch because of size — about 6 feet tall, 300 pounds.

According to the document, the boy also told Fitch that when he had in foster care, several women had exposed themselves to him.

He said Fitch knew all the incident and had as him questions about if the alleged molestation was they were alone in a room and gave him a try such as soda and candy.

It is unknown how F knew about the alleged affair engaging in oral relation with him for a few minutes, the teen told Fitch drove him home but stopped at a store to him a soda. When he came out of the store, the boy

## Police

## PASO ROBLES:

**A three-car wreck I East** left one woman y minor injuries and split 200-gallon tank of fuel on the road, police said.

The tank filled with lizer was not flammable theories said, and was ed off the road about 2 hour after the wreck.

The crash happened about 3:30 p.m. when, Sanchez, a supervisor Western Farm Service so Robles, was turning onto Airport Road.

Sanchez collided with oncoming Dodge Gra. Caravan driving by Eli Braraz of Paso Robles, said. Braraz suffered n cuts and scrapes and v shaken. She was taken the hospital by her sor law, Barbara Braraz.

Police said a third v was involved, Diane O Paso Robles, who was ing a Nissan Pathfinder the other cars pushed her. Neither Sanchez r Oldt were hurt.

Paso Robles police c egs and firefighters r sponsored. The crash de