

Sister Jeanne Morreall, Morningstar



In order to further the reign of God, we as Sisters of Saint Joseph, are called to work to release the gifts in ourselves and others so that we can respond to the needs of this time in diverse and effective ways even though society may promote indifference to human needs.

Morning Star, a Department of Human Services foster home, was established 24 years ago to promote the physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of young people through ongoing care in a healthy, empowering, respectful and loving environment.

How many times have you heard an expectant couple say, “I don’t care if my baby is a boy or a girl, as long as she/he is healthy? There is some of that same feeling with many foster parents. Children with severe physical and/or emotional needs are very hard to place. I, with God’s amazing grace, experience the call to welcome such children to provide an interlude that will be a life-giving experience until parents are revived and young ones returned home or moved to an adoptive setting.

These children come from homes where abuse and/or neglect may be rampant. In several situations, which I encountered, children were medically neglected and could have faced serious repercussions if they were not brought into care.

Oftentimes children are physically and/or emotionally scared after facing years of being abused or simply not well cared for. Presently my children ages 1,2,3,14, and 16 face a vast array of difficulties from blindness, deafness and severe developmental delays to simply not being wanted by family members or having families unable to care for them.

A great deal of my time is spent on the front lines advocating with the court system, doctors, therapists, teachers and case workers so that these fragmented children may receive the very best care while they are with me. Also, when possible, I try to role model for biological parents how

to give appropriate medical and/or emotional care, so that they may realize a better way of dealing with their children.

One aspect of my work which has evolved over the years is outreach to those who have moved on. I am legal guardian for three developmentally delayed individuals who now live in group homes and cannot speak for themselves. They need a voice in their work places and homes to get the services and care they need. Also, I lend emotional, physical and material support to a few young people who are learning to wind their way through systems and life. A few people who have adopted children from my home look to me for support, advice and babysitting services as they deal with the challenges of parenthood.

In addition to the above, I often provide respite care to children whose families face emergency situations or simply need a break as in the case of a wonderful 16 yr old quadriplegic boy. He may stay with us for a couple of weeks while his foster family regroup.

When asked how people can help, I realize the power of prayer which supports what I do. Also I depend to a degree on volunteers (sisters and lay) who are able to be on call to accompany me to a doctor appointment, sit with a child at home or help with a transportation need. This may involve a one day per month or more frequent service depending on need. If a group of people were available for periodic large projects, such as spring and fall yard work, that would also be appreciated.

Do you have friends who want to explore services with me?

I feel enormously blessed to have good health and strength to be able to reach out to these beautiful children and try to make a long lasting difference, making life brighter one child at a time.

If you are interested in volunteering at Morningstar, please contact **Lisa Hartmann, SSJ Director of Volunteers, at lhartmann@ssjrochester.org or 585.641.8415.**