

Fostering hope: Harlings family story

Foster carers come in many shapes and sizes, as do the children that are in need of care. One foster family, with three children of their own, have opened their house to over 18 foster children over the past six years.

Although they describe themselves as ordinary, by opening up their home and their hearts, the Harlings family has showed extraordinary kindness and community spirit in helping children in need.

The Harlings family journey into fostering children started when the youngest child in the family, Lilly, wanted another baby in the family. Knowing that they didn't want to have another child of their own, the family sat down together to look into a couple of different options for their family and how they could best help their community.

A poster that was up at a community centre sparked a conversation around the dinner table about becoming a foster family. That one poster started them on the journey to being foster carers.

"We have a lot of love in our family we figured why not share it around," Lilly, foster family member, 16 years old said.

While it is difficult sometimes, and you see the best and worst of society, these are beautiful kids in unfortunate circumstances; they are not damaged," said foster mum, Joan.

Joan recalls one of the first fostering experiences was taking on a family of three girls under four, whose mother had passed away.

"My youngest daughter, Lilly, had the baby in her room with her and was able to help with night time bottles and it at the time, but she now knows how much hard work babies can be!" said Joan.

Kate, the eldest daughter, loved growing up in a foster family.

"The experience brings us together, learning to deal with dysfunctional behaviour and helping make a difference in the lives of children. I learnt that our life is very privileged and we are just an average family. I want to provide a home like this one to every child that ends up in the foster care system," Kate said.

*names have been changed to protect the foster family's privacy.

