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Betty proves that almost anyone can become a Foster Carer

You're never too old to make a difference to a young person's life. That's the motto of 80-year-old Betty Colyer who, over the past five years has, incredibly, been a foster carer for 27 children.

Fostering children through Barwon Child, Youth & Family (BCYF), Betty, a widower, was the organisation's oldest foster carer until her recent retirement, her commitment demonstrating that age is no barrier to taking on this important role.

Throughout her foster care experience, Betty has not only provided a safe and caring environment for 27 young people in need, she has acted as a grandmother figure with many children regularly requesting to return to Betty for respite care.

Likewise the role has been a rewarding one for the mother of four and grandmother of five, who says it has been a privilege to play such an important role in the lives of so many young people. She encourages anyone considering becoming a foster carer – no matter what their status and age – to get in touch with BCYF.

BCYF is celebrating the important contribution Betty has made to foster caring in the Geelong region and acknowledges the important role she has played in the lives of so many young children.

"Betty has always been very keen to take our young people and children for respite," BCYF Manager Out of Home Care, Cassie Franzose, said.

"She would always make sure she had enough time to make sure the bed and their room was clean and welcoming, and she would go to the supermarket – on the bus, as Betty doesn't drive – especially to ensure she had food they would enjoy.

"A lot of children request to return to Betty, thriving on her taking them to the movies, cooking beautiful meals and treats and, most importantly, providing one on one attention and support."

While she no longer acts as a foster carer, Betty still maintains a strong connection with BCYF and regularly attends carer events. She will be at this year's annual Easter Egg Hunt, being picked up and taken home by BCYF staff.

When reflecting on becoming a Foster Carer at age 75, Betty said "being accepted as a carer was a surprise and a gift. Being trusted with young people is challenging at times, fun most of the time, rewarding and a privilege always."

Betty said she will miss caring for children and found choosing a highlight from her time as a carer difficult, admitting the rewards were wide and varied.

"I've learned a lot about myself as I learned from the children. To see one particular child gain confidence and discover the delights of reading was a great joy. I will miss having children in my life now that my circumstance have changed," Betty added.

Across the Barwon region there is a critical shortage of Foster Carers and Mrs Franzose said BCYF are continuing work to recruit new people into the program.

"We urgently need more people from the community to help us respond to the increasing number of children who need care. Foster Carers can come from all walks of life, they can be single, couples including same sex couples, and families, with or without children. What is important is that they can provide children with a safe and nurturing home," Mrs Franzose added.

BCYF provide Foster Carers with ongoing training, education and 24 hour support. There is an urgent need for all types of carers from overnight or emergency care, respite, through to longer term carers.



“If you could you make the difference in the life of a child and become a Foster Carer contact BCYF today,” Mrs Franzose urged the community.

For more information on becoming a Foster Carer with Barwon Child, Youth and Family contact BCYF on 03 5221 4466 or families can register on the BCYF website www.bcyf.org.au.

To celebrate her retirement from foster caring, Betty is available for photo and interview opportunities at 1.30 pm on Tuesday, April 2. Further information can be provided upon request.

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