

COUPLE HONORED

Muscatine couple honored for their open arms



15 HOURS AGO • BY [JOE JAROSZ](#)

MUSCATINE, Iowa — In the beginning of their marriage, there was some contention between how many children the family would have.

Pam Keefe said she wanted a big family, at around six children. Byron said he wanted a smaller family. As foster parents, the couple ended up, at least for now, with 11 children.

And because of their large family, and their large hearts when it comes to foster care, the Keefes were recently awarded the Foster Family of the

Year by the Bethany for Children & Families in Moline. Joscelyn Stone, communications manager for Bethany for Children & Families, said the family was nominated by the social worker who works with them.

"When the Board of Directors were reviewing the nominations, they were floored by the Keefe's nomination and were just excited to award them for their efforts," Stone said. "We were all extraordinarily impressed with the family."

Personal

Names: Pam and Byron Keefe

Ages: 47 and 49

Professions: Daycare providers

Family: Eleven children, five grown and currently raising six. Two are biological and the other nine were adopted.

Q&A

How did you two get involved in foster care?

Pam: We first got involved in 1996. We had two young boys of our own and we wanted to have more children. My husband grew up in the foster care system and figured we had a handle on our two boys and now it's time to give back to the community.

Byron: Jesus said to those who have been given much, much is required. I was one of 10 kids placed in foster care when I was three-years-old. I was with my family for 15 years so I feel very

fortunate. So many years ago, we made the decision that since I was fortunate, lets give back. As the kids got older, for a couple years we thought, soon the kids will be gone and we'll be able to travel and do whatever, but that got boring and we decided to start over and do it again.

How did your two boys react at the time the decision was made?

Pam: They were a part of the decision making process when we did it the first time. They were excited, but they were young, 7 and 9 years old, and excited about the idea of having other kids in the house. In the beginning, they [Department of Human Services] told us we were not suited for girls because of the layout of our home. But then the first match was two girls.

What are some common misconceptions about foster care that you'd like to correct?

Pam: Foster care is for kids who've been removed from their home for whatever reason. I think that's always been the misconception that kids are removed for something they did. I think that's a huge misconception, that they're bad and in foster care.

Byron: Kids may have behaviors but that could be remedied with attention, love and a stable family.

Pam: I think another is people think it's too much work to become foster parents. They hear about the rules and regulations but they're there in place for a reason and it's not as difficult as some people think.

Byron: Nobody is asking people to solve the issues but there's a small part everyone can do. If everyone took a small part, the problem would be much smaller.

What were your thoughts when you were told you won the award?

Pam: We were very surprised. So when we received the call, we were surprised because we didn't even know there was such an award. The nomination by the case worker said we had exemplary cooperation, and we went above and beyond what's required of foster care.

Byron: I was shocked and I guess humbled, too.

Pam: To be publicly thanked was quite an honor.