**14404, Ken Cabral – Foster Families**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thrilled to be here to speak about the value of Foster Families. As the Regional Administrator for the Department of Children and Families in CT I have seen first-hand the circumstances that many foster children come from. Of course the types of homes foster children come from can vary widely from being orphaned to being removed from homes for a variety of reasons. Many times the need for a foster home comes about under emergency circumstances and there is no time to hunt for a foster family. We need foster families who are ready and willing to take in a foster child at a moment’s notice. Those emergency situations can mean dealing with a child who is scared, hungry or even hurt and arrived straight from receiving medical care.

Sometimes a foster family may need to offer a foster home for a child for short periods of time and sometimes they must offer a home for a lengthy period of time. As much as it takes a special person to take in a child without notice who needs care, it also takes a special person to care for a child long term and then be willing to release that child either back to his/her parents or to an adoptive family. Both take a tremendous amount of love and understanding for children.

Some children may just need some TLC while their own parents are receiving care that they need so they can once again care for their own children. Some children may be coming from an abusive situation where they have learned the hard way not to trust anyone. It takes someone very special to be able to love a child, regardless of age and regardless of background, unconditionally. It takes great understanding to take in a foster child and help guide him/her through the difficulties of the foster care system, or through the difficulties of life in general. Just as in a traditional family, each child is an individual and has unique needs. But, whereas a traditional family may have months or weeks to figure out a situation, a foster family must figure it out in a matter of days or even hours.

For these reasons and so many more I value Foster Families for the unselfish love and care they provide for these children. They provide a loving and nurturing environment for whatever children are brought to their home for care at a moment’s notice. For this reason and more I want to express my gratitude and my appreciation tonight for Foster Care Families. I believe they are a special breed, overflowing with love and care for children of all ages who need care. We depend heavily upon them when working a legal case that involves their parents and they tend to grow up very quickly. When tragedy strikes we have to act quickly and having good foster care homes at the ready is important. That is why we are always ready to take applications of new families to become Foster Care Families.

Children are our first priority, our next generation and we owe it to them to leave them a world that is safe, clean and whole for them to take over upon their arrival into adulthood. Many of them saw insecurity as children and as adults they are committed to providing a secure society to live in and make their families. Tonight we honor our foster families to let them know how much we appreciate them and look for them to help us care for these less fortunate children.

May is Foster Care month so tonight we want to honor our current Foster Care Families and show our appreciation for all the hard work they do to nurture and care for the children in our foster care system. We’d also like to encourage you to invite other families to become Foster Care Families to help in this important need in our community. Those who already fulfill that need will tell you that being a Foster Parent is a heartwarming job by itself. These children have as much love to give as they need to receive. You will never regret the experience.

Thank you