

NAVY DISPATCH

June 18, 2009

Hometown heroes making a difference

The Pinckney's: A military foster family

by Jennifer Fightin
Foster Home
Recruitment Specialist

Palmer and Barbara Pinckney had been raising their own two children, and had talked about becoming foster parents for three years. Suddenly, while on vacation one day, they decided, "Let's just do it." Palmer recalls, "It was a leap of faith for us. We had heard that there was a need for good families to foster children, and we did it!"

The Pinckney family provides love and support to foster children while their parents work on reunification services. Palmer Pinckney has been in the military for 16 years. He is a Communication Specialist First Class E6 in the U.S. Navy. He and his wife, Barbara, have been foster parents for the past three years. They were surprised to learn that the father of the two siblings, currently placed in their home, is also in the service. In addition, Mr. Pinckney knew their father, as they had been stationed together overseas. It was comforting for the children's father to

Can you be a hero for a child who needs a home? Military foster families are greatly needed. Please contact Foster Home Licensing at 1-877-792-KIDS (5437).

learn that the Pinckneys were caring for his children

In San Diego, there are a high number of military families. On occasion, military children are in need of out of home care. Many of the 6000 children who are in out of home care in San Diego County come from homes where they have encountered



abuse and neglect. When they are removed from their homes, they are removed from all that is familiar to them. For military children, that includes the military lifestyle that they are accustomed to. San Diego needs military families who are willing to open their homes and hearts to these children.

Military service is not just a profession. It is a life choice; a heartfelt voluntary commitment that often carries a high price for military families.

Among the many challenges faced by military families are frequent deployments, recurrent moves and subsequent transitions. As military families make commitments to their country they have to continuously readjust their lives. For military foster parents these adjustments can be even more challenging but also come with more rewards. During

the Pinckney's past three years of foster parenting, the rewards have been plentiful.

For the Pinckney's own children, being part of a foster family seemed natural and a good match. Their seven year-old son, Logan, once explained to a new foster child, "Call them mom and dad; you are part of our family now." One of the greatest rewards of fostering has been teaching their own children compassion and understanding. When asked once why his family did things the way they do, Logan proudly answered, "We are a foster family you know." For him, being part of a foster family sets them apart...it makes them special.

Palmer said that he also gets great satisfaction from being able to provide a good role model to children. Barbara recalled that one foster child shared with her, "Palmer is a real man isn't he? Real men don't hit." The child was referring to the fact that Palmer, although strong in stature and character, does not yell, hit or abuse. He calmly redirects, offering hugs and praise when appropriate.

The Pinckneys work well together as a team. While Palmer was stationed at Port Hueneme in Ventura County he was often out of town or on tour. Barbara would take on the parenting responsibility herself. It is easier on her when both of them are home. Palmer relates really well with the foster children and Barbara enjoys working with the birth families. She likes assisting the birth mothers with reunification services and "helping them get back on the right track."

The Pinckneys realize that people might be reluctant to become foster parents because they are afraid of the unknown. Barbara said, "I learn more and more from each child we take into our home and from each family we help to reunify." You don't have to know everything about parenting or fostering to start. Foster Home Licensing provides initial and ongoing training for foster parents.

According to Ann Fox, Foster Home Licensing Manager, "More foster parents are always needed, especially for children under age five and sibling groups." In order to obtain a foster home license, applicants attend an orientation, get fingerprinted, and complete a foster parent application. Once this process is completed, a Foster Home Licensing social worker visits the family to check the home for safety and space. All foster parents need to be certified in CPR / First Aid, have current TB tests and attend 27 hours of training. Depending on the child's age, foster parents are reimbursed between \$450-\$600 per month for the care of each child. They also receive medical and dental insurance for the children.