

At 60-something, couple continues to welcome foster children

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MESQUITE—Paula and Lance Raymond are the only couple in their Sunday school class at First Baptist Church in Sunnyvale who are not empty nesters. Although they both are in their 60s, children's voices and little footsteps often echo through the halls of their home in Mesquite.

The Raymonds have been foster parents nearly 17 years, and it's a ministry they don't intend to stop.

"I think what keeps us doing it is the same reason we went into it," she said. "We really saw a need, and we could fill that need. We felt like we could do a good job of filling that need."

He is a retired police officer, and she worked as a caseworker before becoming a stay-at-home mom to homeschool her kids.

When their youngest was 9 years old, he heard an advertisement on the radio about the need for foster parents. He knew instantly his family should get involved.

"Both of us are service-minded," he said. "We're both believers, and we both serve. I like the opportunity to have a ministry with kids and young lives. There are a lot of things they've never experienced that I can help them experience."

The Raymonds have housed 37 foster children in their home, and with each one, they make sure to involve them in all family activities, including

volunteering projects. They go camping, swim, cook and play games. He is an avid woodworker and enjoys teaching the craft to the children.

“My favorite thing is seeing them change,” she said. “We have had some that we have not seen change. But for the majority, once they feel secure and safe and know they are going to be OK, they just blossom.”



Paula and Lance Raymond enjoy seeing how their foster children relate to their son, Eric, who has Down syndrome. (Photo / Aimee Freston) They’ve also enjoyed seeing how their foster children respond and relate with their son, Eric. Eric has Down syndrome, and while some of the children are a little leery of him at first, Eric’s smiles and bright personality often help the children settle in and feel secure.

“It’s been really neat,” Eric’s father said. “These kids come, and they fall in love with Eric.”

“A lot of times, they’ll watch something on the TV together, and he’ll dance with them and fit right in,” his mother added.

Eric isn’t their only child who has embraced foster care. Their daughter and son-in-law also have become foster parents and recently adopted two children who were previously foster children with the Raymonds.

And while many people their age have downsized their homes, the Raymonds decided to upsize so they could care for more foster children.

“Someone asked us how long we plan on doing it, but we’ve never even talked about quitting,” she said. “It can be very challenging, but we love doing it. It’s one of the ways we can really minister. I think that not everyone can be a foster parent, but I do think everyone could support a foster parent.

“In Scripture, it talks about visiting the orphans and widows, and these aren’t true orphans, because they do have parents, but essentially it’s the same idea. We see the need and can meet that need.”