

Polygamist sect's children sing, write poems to thank Baptists

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LULING (ABP)—Children seized from a polygamist sect's compound and temporarily entrusted to a Texas Baptist child-care agency bid farewell to their former caretakers May 31 with poetry, song and strong emotion.

In anticipation of a court ruling that would allow them to return to their parents, 72 children from the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints compound created a program to thank workers at the [Baptist Child & Family Services Youth Ranch](#) in Luling. They had been in the organization's care [since the early days of April](#), when state authorities began taking children from the FLDS outpost.

Children removed by state authorities from the Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints ranch near Eldorado play at the Baptist Child & Family Services Youth Ranch at Luling.

The children lined up all the rocking chairs they could find on the Youth Ranch campus and asked the Baptist Child & Family Services workers who had cared for them for weeks to be seated. What followed left the agency's staffers in tears.

Children read a poem they had composed, written on a large piece of poster board and decorated with hand-drawn flowers.

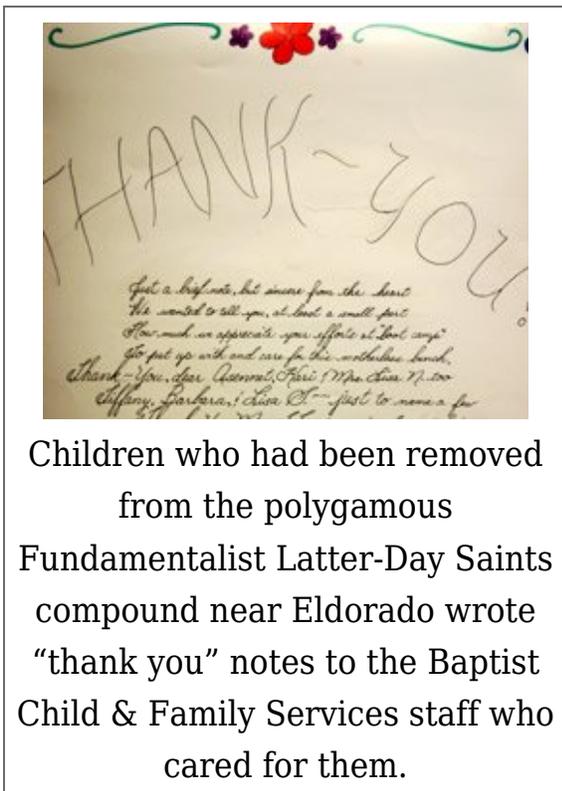
The FLDS children mentioned many of the organization’s workers by name and thanked them for specific actions.

The children also delivered individual notes and performed songs they had composed for the occasion.

“They just overwhelmed us with all of this—in a good way,” said Asennet Segura, the BCFS director of residential services. “It was so real. Most of them signed the back of the poster with the poem on it.”

That simple gesture by the FLDS children, Segura said, “showed real trust, since they are wary of signing anything.”

BCFS President Kevin Dinnin said the agency received “literally hundreds” of registered letters from FLDS parents back at the sect’s Yearning For Zion Ranch in Eldorado. The letters contained requests on how they wanted the care for their children structured—regarding everything from medications to education.



“We complied with all of those requests, except one—that FLDS elders be allowed to conduct religious services,” he said. Dinnin noted the request was denied not by BCFS officials, but by state authorities.

The child and family services agency, affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, also coordinated the statewide process of returning all of the 400-plus children to their FLDS caregivers, pursuant to the court order.

“Originally, we were going to bus everyone back to San Angelo, but the FLDS attorneys were granted a request that parents be allowed to pick the children up, so we put that process together,” Dinnin said.

“Some people didn’t understand that BCFS’s role was just to care for the children when they were in need of care.”

“We didn’t play a role in the removal or any of the court hearings. We just took care of the children while the legal aspects were being sorted out. But when the children at the Youth Ranch expressed appreciation for how BCFS treated them, we knew the people who most needed to understand our hearts did just that.”

State authorities initially seized all of the children on the compound because of allegations that underage girls had been taken as wives by much older FLDS men.

The Texas Supreme Court ruled May 29 the state did not have sufficient reason to hold all of the children because of its suspicions about the sect’s religious practices. A lower court then ordered the children returned to their FLDS parents or caregivers.

But that wasn’t the topic of conversation as the FLDS children bid farewell

to their BCFS caregivers.

As one 13-year-old girl who was cared for there wrote, "Heavenly Father will bless those who bless his children."