Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies
Est 1998. Published by Social Care Ireland

Volume 3
Issue 1 *A Celebration of Foster Care, Vol.3, 2002*

Article 4

2002-01-01

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Recommended Citation
Cregan, Siobhain (2002) "A Celebration of Foster Care," *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 4.
Available at: http://arrow.dit.ie/ijass/vol3/iss1/4

A Celebration of Foster Care

by

Siobháin Cregan (Aged 12 Years)

Siobháin Cregan, represented Irish Youth Carers during the 12th World Conference of Foster Care which was held in the Netherlands 15th –20th July 2001. This is the charismatic speech that she wrote and gave at the closing ceremony.

"Hi, my name is Siobháin Cregan from West Cork in Ireland. I am a natural child of a fostering family. I live in a large house overlooking the sea, where the door is always open. I live with my Mam, my Dad, my aunt, my two brothers, my six sisters, one dog, two cats, two kittens, seven hens and two ducks!

My family has been fostering long before I was born. We have fostered about forty children in our home.

Out of my six sisters, I keep forgetting that three of them are fostered because the only difference I can see, is their surname, and that they have two families.

My three foster sisters are older than me, and one of them has been my sister since before I was born, and the other two have helped me grow up since I was four years old. I love my home and my big family because you are never alone - there is always someone to talk to. My sister Christine and I took up guitar lessons together and she has always been there to finish my poems and tune my guitar.

Another sister of mine has been able to put a smile on my face any second of any day. My eldest sister has helped open my eyes and my mind because she is disabled and has never limited herself.

I love having loads of sisters but I hate knowing that someday they may have to leave. I love partaking in raising a child but what can be heartbreaking is if you get very close to a foster child and they have to leave and no one will help you keep in contact or tell you where they are.

I love the way I have to think about the number in my family before answering friendly questions. I love thinking that someday when I come home from school I may have another brother or sister, but I hate thinking that someday when I come home from school one of them may have left.

I like helping children who are hurt - but hate knowing they have been hurt in the first place. I love the way fostering broadens my horizons. I hate knowing many children are heartbroken before they enter our home.

I enjoyed this conference because it gave me the opportunity to learn more about fostering. Listening to youth is a step in the right direction and I am really glad that adults and youth are walking the long path together. Today's youth are tomorrow's adults, and tomorrow's children will benefit from the guidance you give today.

Thank you for opening your ears and your eyes. Thank you for opening your mind and your soul. And especially thank you for opening your homes. Thank you."