

Santa Barbara County Resident Opened Her Home to Hundreds of Foster Kids

Lillian Pipersburg and her husband, Phillip, have been a haven for children from troubled backgrounds for 30 years



Lillian Pipersburg and her husband, Phillip, have been foster parents to an amazing 213 children in Santa Barbara, and have no plans to stop. (Contributed photo)

By Brooke Holland, Noozhawk Staff Writer | [@NoozhawkNews](#) | May 15, 2017 | 8:47 p.m.

For 213 Santa Barbara County foster children, Lillian Pipersburg wasn't their first mother, but she was someone who made them feel secure.

The Santa Barbara native and her husband, Phillip, have been a haven for kids from troubled backgrounds for 30 years.

“I’m not a person who focuses on myself,” Pipersburg said. “If I see a need, I want to be involved.”

May is **National Foster Care Month**, and the Pipersburgs are an example of a resource family opening their home to enhance young lives in foster care.

The Mesa residents are working with the **Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services** to foster children of all ages and backgrounds.

The county’s **Our County, Our Kids** program relies on resource families, who assist in helping and nurturing children who needs a place to call home.

Pipersburg, a retired probation officer, spent several years managing and living at the county’s only foster care emergency shelter. Children walked through the doors at all hours of the night, and she looked after up to six kids at a time.

“She has provided each child deep, individualized care and support,” said Gustavo Prado, a business specialist for the Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services. “Resource parents are a primary role and important for the kids’ healing process.”

Prado has been working with Pipersburg for more than 20 years.

He met Pipersburg one weekend when he got a work call to pick up a 2-year-old boy at 3 a.m.

Prado remembers the toddler had not been bathed recently, was unkempt with a soiled diaper and cried the entire drive to the shelter.

“She took him and embraced him,” Prado said. “The boy was shocked, and he immediately settled down.”

When Prado returned to the shelter the next day to visit the boy, he didn’t recognize the kid sitting on the couch watching cartoons.

“He was cleaned up, happy and calm,” Prado said.

At any given time, about 400 children on average are in foster care in Santa Barbara County, Prado said. **Our County, Our Kids** supports newborns to adults up to 21 years of age.

Receiving invitations to high school and college commencements, weddings, birthdays, developing positive relationships and seeing former foster youth grown up are some things Pipersburg finds rewarding.

Her goal is to reunite children with their birth parents when a safe home life can be re-established.

“We like to see families get united,” Pipersburg said. “It’s our desire to see the family heal, and we want to help the parents. We also acknowledge, understand and support when a family is not healthy or well enough to take a child.

“I’m going to do everything I can to work with the children’s biological families.”

Pipersburg has four grown biological children, with the oldest 43.

She shows no sign of closing her door to children in need. The youngest kid she is currently caring for is 13 years old.

“I feel like I can do this for the rest of my life,” Pipersburg said. “It’s a worthwhile journey if you love children and desire to see a healthy growth in children. We have taken a few breaks, but never closed up shop.”

People interested in learning about foster care and adoption in Santa Barbara County are urged to attend a resource family informational meeting. More information can be found at <http://ourcountyourkids.org>.

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